

Homily
April 9, 2023
Easter Sunday
27:33-35:16

What are your Easter Sunday family customs? Besides coming to church. What are your customs? Food, family, a plethora of plastic eggs? – or real ones...

You know there are a lot of Easter customs over the years that have come down to us. Some originated as demonstrations of faith in the Resurrection. For example, remember when we came with a new Easter outfit, or a new hat? (♪...in your Easter bonnet with all the flowers upon it...♪) That wasn't just a statement of fashion. It announced that we indeed had put on Christ. Or that tiny chick emerging from the Easter egg. It's more than an image for cute seasonal cards. It represents Christ bursting from the tomb, eager to begin new life. And that Easter Bunny, you know, with its ability to reproduce abundantly and quickly, symbolizes the abundance of new life in Christ.

You might consider how your family Easter customs reflect Easter joy and reality.

These customs, however, do not explain Easter. They are demonstrations of faith in the Resurrection. Those who saw the empty tomb -as we heard – were dumbfounded. They were amazed, but they did not understand.

You know, my brothers and sisters, it always amazes me the honesty of the early Christians – what they wrote and what they said to us about their experiences. Oh, they reported the experience of the Risen Lord. Yet in most of the Resurrection accounts, it is clear they do not understand at first. You would think that having been instructed by the Lord that they would have understood this extraordinary event. But his return was beyond what they could have anticipated or comprehended.

The empty tomb is the **empty tomb**. Even Mary Magdala says in a passage immediately following what we heard today, “They have taken the Lord from the tomb and we do not know where they put him.” It's not until Jesus broke open the Scriptures and explained them on the Road to Emmaus and in the Upper Room that the disciples understood what had happened.

Peter demonstrates this pattern in our First Reading today. He describes Jesus' public ministry and sets the Resurrection into the realm of *actual history*. It is then that he proclaims, “We are witnesses of all that he did.” But this historical setting and witness does not explain “Resurrection.” Because Jesus' Resurrection bursts the bonds of the ultimate historic reality – death.

There is no real way of understanding this. For this is more than the cycle of life into death into life that we witness each season. No. This is a complete transformation into something **new**.

Our Second Reading urges: Seek what is above. Not what is below. If we believe that Jesus has indeed been raised, then the way we live should demonstrate this. We will seek what is above rather than the greed, violence and indifference that seems so much a part of what is on Earth. It's basically – focus on what is above, even as you live on this Earth. For what is above in Christ is what gives meaning and purpose to what is here in our basic reality.

My brothers and sisters, the faith that the biblical writers proclaim is more than assent of the brain. It calls for a living commitment that takes hold of our entire self. Faith in the risen Jesus transforms our minds and hearts so that we live lives modeled on his. Such faith reminds us that “we have died and our lives are now hidden with Christ in God.”

Our world mired in death, despair, climate change – you name it – **needs** this feast of Faith, this day and way of life rooted in Alleluia. Yes. We need it. But this day and season is not enough. There must be constant signs of hope for the world to believe that the raising of Christ is more than just a tentant of faith given to us by theologians. Proof of the power of the Resurrection is not found in an empty tomb, nor in a theological tome. Proof of the power of the Resurrection is seen in the committed lives of those who believe.

How then, are our lives committed signs? I'm going to repeat that. How are our lives committed signs of our belief? Can you answer that right now? Perhaps not.

We could look at it this way: How do you live mercy, compassion, faithfulness in relationships, wisdom, understanding, strength and perseverance?

We are about to renew our Baptismal Promises. May this renewal be a powerful proclamation of our recommitment in Christ to daily living Resurrection Hope.