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Journey with Jesus from Death to Life

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Journey with Jesus from Death to Life

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Easter Sunday

Sunday Readings for April 8, 2012 for Cycle B:

Acts 10:34-43; Ps 118; Col 3:1-4 (or 1 Cor 5:6-8); Jn 20:1-9

JOURNEY WITH JESUS FROM DEATH TO LIFE

Lawrence E. Frizzell

Rise heart; thy Lord is risen. Sing his praise
Without delays,
Who takes thee by the hand, that thou likewise
With him mayst rise:
That, as his death calcined thee to dust,
His life may make thee gold, and much more just.
Awake, my lute, and struggle for thy part
With all thy art.
The cross taught all wood to resound his name,
Who bore the same.
His stretched sinews taught all strings, what key
Is best to celebrate this most high day.

(George Herbert, "Easter")

Along with millions of people throughout the world, we reflect daily on the Paschal Mystery, the Death-and-Resurrection of Jesus. During Holy Week and during the Easter season we have the opportunity to experience again the drama of the great "failure" that God the Father used to prove that God's ways are not our ways (see Isaiah 55:8-9). "For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength" (1 Corinthians 1:25).

The first reading takes excerpts of St. Peter's speech when Cornelius, the Roman centurion, sought to become a Christian. Peter explained that the Good News of Jesus' triumph over death leads to the forgiveness of sins for everyone who believes in his name; moreover, God has appointed him to be judge of the living and the dead (Acts 10:42-43). The resurrection of Jesus not only vindicated his righteousness and divine Sonship, but laid the foundation for the peace of all humanity.

How can each individual be touched by the Paschal Mystery? Indeed it presents the truth that God rewards those who are faithful and that all human beings must face judgment for deeds good and evil. In the letter to the Colossians, St. Paul reflects on the meaning of Baptism (see Romans 6:3-4), whereby all Christians have entered into the death of Jesus so as to share in his resurrection-and-ascension.

Just as St. Peter's reference to the prophets indicated the necessity of knowing the Scriptures to understand God's plan in Christ (Acts 10:43), so St. Paul used the symbols of the Jewish Passover to teach the Corinthians. The Passover was preceded by a housecleaning to remove all

leaven (Exodus 12:15-16). The transition to the new year (which in the old Hebrew calendar began in the spring) demanded a seven day abstinence from leavened products. Does your housecleaning ever provoke thoughts of the moral purification that may be needed in your heart and family circle? "Let us celebrate the feast ... with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (5:8). The blood of the lamb saved Israelites from the angel of death who passed over Egypt (Exodus 12:7, 12-13).

"Our paschal lamb, Christ, has been sacrificed!" Through his obedience our sins are forgiven and our efforts to reform our lives by cooperating with God's gifts will be efficacious. "We were indeed buried with him through baptism into death so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:4).

The Gospel according to John emphasizes that the resurrection of Jesus took place early on the first day of the week. Just as the Gospel begins with reference to the first creation through God's Word (see Genesis 1:3), so the resurrection of the Word-made-flesh signals the beginning of the new creation. Growth into the fullness of what Jesus accomplished in his Paschal Mystery lies at the heart of our life-time pilgrimage.

 This day my Saviour rose,
And did inclose this light for his:
That, as each beast his manger knows,
Man might not of his fodder miss.
Christ hath took in this piece of ground,
And made a garden there for those
 Who want herbs for their wound.

 The rest of our Creation
Our great Redeemer did remove
With the same shake, which at his passion
Did th' earth and all things with it move.
As Samson bore the doors away,
Christ's hands, though nailed, wrought our salvation,
 And did unhinge that day.

 The brightness of that day
We sullied by our foul offence:
Wherefore that robe we cast away,
Having a new at his expense,
Whose drops of blood paid the full price,
That was required to make us gay,
 And fit for Paradise.

(George Herbert, "Sunday")