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The truth of the Resurrection

Thomas Gumbleton | Apr. 13, 2012 The Peace Pulpit

In the past, I used to think about the Resurrection -- and perhaps many of you did, too -- as a very important proof about Jesus. He had claimed to be the Son of God, and so the Resurrection proves that He really is who He says He is -- the Son of God, not just son of Mary and Joseph. That, of course, is an important part of the Resurrection, yet if you listen to today?s Gospel, those disciples at the beginning did not see it that way.

They were totally confused and upset, terrorized even, because they just didn?t have any sense that this was going to happen, so they couldn?t explain it. They fled from the tomb. They didn?t say anything to anybody, so at that point, they really weren?t witnesses to this truth about Jesus, that He is the Son of God. The real essence of the Resurrection, and what is so important to us, is to realize that it is not simply a proof that Jesus is the Son of God.

By the time the Gospels were written, the disciples did not need to prove in writing through the Gospels who Jesus was. They had experienced Him. They had come to know the truth of the Resurrection, that it means not just life for Jesus, going through death to new life, but it meant new life for everyone who follows Jesus. It means the gift of the risen life of Jesus for every one of us. For us to get a sense of how incredible this is, I think it?s a good thing to review a little bit about the history of God?s relationship with us down through the tens of thousands of years, from the very beginning from creation.

In the Book of Genesis, we?re told how God brought out of nothing this universe, how God created the human race, and when we think about this, we begin to realize each one of us is a unique creation of God. That?s the beginning of our relationship with God. We are loved into existence by God. Without God, we could not continue to exist. We would simply be the nothing that was before creation, before God loved us into being.

So our relationship with God begins with our creation, the creation of the entire universe and of each one of us. In the Jewish history there are different points at which God?s love is shown to the people in a very dramatic way. One of those ways was a moment in Jewish history that they would never forget, just like sometimes in our own history there are certain events that happen that really leave a mark on us.

Who of us can?t remember where I was on September 11, 2001. Nine-eleven is a mark in our history that we can never forget. In the Jewish history, there are things like that, too, and in the Book of Exodus is that example that we?re all very familiar with, where the Jewish people are fleeing from the Egyptians. They had broken free out of slavery. Now they were confronted suddenly by the Egyptian troops pursuing them, and the Red Sea is in front of them, but God finds a way for them to go through those waters, and those waters become a way of salvation, God?s saving love.

We connect those waters with baptism, God?s saving love poured onto us to enable us to live with the life of Jesus. Further on, through the prophets, there is a very beautiful passage in the Book of Ezekiel, where the chosen people have fallen away from following God faithfully. Through Ezekiel, God proclaims to them that

Easter Sunday
The Resurrection of the Lord
[Readings are from Holy Saturday]

Genesis 1:1-2:2

Psalm 104:1-2, 5-6, 10, 12, 13-14, 24, 35

Genesis 22:1-18

Psalm 16:5, 8, 9-10, 11

Exodus 14:15-15:1

Exodus 15:1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 17-18

Isaiah 54:5-14

Psalms 30:2, 4, 5-6, 11-12, 13

Isaiah 55:1-11

Isaiah 12:2-3, 4, 5-6

Baruch 39:9-15, 32-4:4

Psalm 19:8, 9, 10, 11

Ezekiel 36:16-17, 18-28

Psalm 42:3, 5, 43:3, 4

Isaiah 12:2-3, 4, 5-6

God will save them. Even though they have not reached out to God, God is reaching out to them.

God says, ?I will pour new water upon you. I will give you fresh water and it will change your hard hearts into hearts of love.? God pours fourth love upon us, down through all the millennium, until finally, as we heard proclaimed in our second reading today from the letter of Saint Paul to the Church at Rome. ?Here is the incredible love of God for us. Don?t you know that in baptism, which unites us to Christ, we are all baptized and plunged into His death? By this baptism in His death, we are buried with Christ. Then as Jesus was raised from the dead by the glory of God, so we begin living a new life.?

Jesus went through death to new life, and we begin to go through death to new life when we go through the sacrament of baptism. Paul goes on to say, ?If we have been joined to Jesus by dying a death like His, so shall we be by a Resurrection like His. We know our own self was crucified with Christ so as to destroy sin, so that we may no longer serve sin, but we have died with Christ and so we live also with Christ. We know that Jesus, once risen from the dead, will not die again, for by dying He is dead to sin once and for all, and now the life that He lives is life with God, and that?s the life that we live.?

That?s what we celebrate on Easter. It?s not taking the Resurrection to prove that Jesus is the Son of God. It?s understanding that we, too, have gone through death to new life through the waters of baptism. Just as the chosen people were saved in the desert through the Red Sea, we are saved, given life, and not life that ends in time, but life that is forever with God. That?s the incredible love of God. God has brought us from nothingness to life, and from human life to the fullness of life in Jesus.

We celebrate then today that Jesus has risen. Death has no power over Him. Death has no power over us. We are alive with Christ Jesus living within us. So we thank God and praise God, and we promise God that we will share this live wherever we can, so that God?s Reign comes to its fullness in the human creation of which we are part. We thank God, praise God and now live the life that God gives us.

[Bishop Gumbleton gave this homily at Most Holy Trinity, Detroit.]

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