

Easter Sunday – Yr ABC

Acts of the Apostles 10:34a, 37–43;

Colossians 3:1–4; John 20:1–9

Easter

Not restoration, but transformation

Early on Sunday morning, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been taken away from the entrance. John 20:1

-Doreen Cunningham was in a state of shock. The British embassy in Thailand had just notified her of the death of her 25-year-old son, Paul. He had been backpacking through Thailand, found unconscious, and rushed to a hospital, where he died. An autopsy showed that his death was caused by a massive overdose of heroin. The autopsy also showed that he had swallowed 20 tiny bags of heroin to smuggle them out of the country. One of the bags broke in his stomach, causing the overdose and death.

-The news left Paul's mother devastated beyond words. His death was hard enough to bear. But the knowledge of how he died made it almost impossible to bear. Doreen Cunningham had no idea her son was involved in drugs—much less drug smuggling. It was like a sword piercing her heart. And so as she waited for his dead body to be flown back to England, she set about the sad task of making all the funeral arrangements.

-Before the arrangements were complete, she got a call from London's Heathrow Airport. She couldn't believe her ears. It was Paul; he was not dead, but alive. It turned out that Paul had lost his passport. Apparently, it was found and sold on the black market, and then altered to represent the man on whose body it was found in Thailand. Paul's mother went from incredible sorrow to indescribable joy.

-This story gives us a faint glimmer of what the disciples and the mother of the Lord Jesus experienced 2,000 years ago on Easter Sunday morning. Like Paul's mother, Mary had relived her son's tragic death countless times in the three days after it. Then came Easter Sunday morning and the incredible news that her Son was not dead. He had risen. But the similarity between the two stories stops here. Paul was only thought to have died. Christ had actually died.

-Mary held his dead body in her arms. Paul's new life—if we can call it that—was a restoration to his former life. Christ's new life was a quantum leap forward into an infinitely higher life. It involved resurrection. The word *resurrection* does not mean a restoration to one's old previous life, as happened to Lazarus, the widow of Nain, and Jairus' daughter.

-It means that the body of the Lord Jesus that rose on Easter was radically different from the body that was buried on Good Friday. Saint Paul compares the difference of a body before and after resurrection to the difference of a seed and the plant that eventually emerges from it. He says: *When the body is buried, it is mortal; when raised, it will be immortal. When buried, it is ugly and weak; when raised, it will be beautiful and strong. When buried, it is a physical body; when raised, it will be a spiritual body.*" 1 Corinthians 15:42–44

-As we study the Gospel stories of the resurrection, we see that along with Christ's transformation came a transformation of his disciples, also. They went from being a group of despairing people to a group of inspired missionaries, who carried the Good News of Easter to the four corners of the earth. And everywhere they preached, the power of Easter began to work miracles in people's lives. It transformed despair into hope; darkness into light; hatred into love; sorrow into joy.

-And those miracles haven't stopped yet. They continue today. And this brings us to this Church on this Easter morning. Easter has an important message for each one of us, personally. It is the important message that Christ wants to work miracles for us—and through us—just as he did for his disciples. It is the message that we don't have to wait until we die to share in the new life and power that Christ won for us on Easter.

-We can begin to share in it right now, in this very Mass, because the risen Christ is in our midst, right now in this Mass. He wants to do for us what he has done for millions of believers before us. He wants to give us the power to begin to live new lives, right now. He wants to give us the power to trust once again, after we have had that trust betrayed. He wants to give us the power to love once again, after we have had that love rejected. He wants to give us the power to hope once again, after we've had our hope dashed to pieces. Even more marvelously, through us, God wants to give the same power to other people.

-This is what Easter is all about. It is the Good News that the Lord Jesus has triumphed over evil and death—and so will we, if we open our hearts to him. It is the Good News that Christ wants to carry this message to others, especially by our example. It is the Good News that nothing can defeat us anymore—not pain, not sorrow, not sin, not even death itself. This is what Easter is all about.

-It's about letting the Lord Jesus turn our sorrow into joy—as He did for His own mother and for the mother of Paul Cunningham. This is what we celebrate on this day of days.