

One of the beautiful symbols of this Easter springtime weekend is the Easter egg:

A small chick begins the long journey of birth: the not-yet-bird weighs little more than air; its beak and claws are barely pinpricks. The bird-to-be is in its own little world: protected by the rigid shell, warmed by the mother hen's body, nourished by the nutrients within the egg's membrane. But then, the chick begins the work of life: over several days, the chick keeps picking and picking until it can break out from its narrow world into an incomparably wider one — but for this to happen, *the egg has to go to pieces*. New life demands shattering the old!
New life demands shattering the old!

Sisters and brothers, *this* is what Easter is all about!

- ❖ The resurrection of Jesus that we celebrate on Easter is not just a doctrine we try to prove or problem we argue about;
- ❖ The resurrection of Jesus is not just an event that happened over 2000 years ago in Jerusalem that we commemorate after the first full moon each spring!

The Resurrection is *the life and action of the Risen Jesus within and among us* – that transforms us, changes us, awakens us... as our Peter Daino said in his Good Friday Homily: "Resurrection is something we *experience!*"

But, sisters and brothers, there is no Easter without Good Friday: new life demands shattering the old – Crucifixion *and* Resurrection – death *and* resurrection: Easter completes this archetypal pattern at the center of Christian life. *Both* death *and* resurrection are at the central core of the Easter experience.

+++++

What does all this mean for us, disciples of Jesus this Easter 2019?

As the climax of our 40-day Lenten journey of spring cleaning of our hearts, this Good Friday-Easter dynamic addresses the fundamental human question: 'What ails us?' What isn't working in our lives? Most of us feel the force of this question ...something is not right, ...something is just not working in our personal lives... Will I "sell"? Will they "buy" me? This is the first meaning of Easter: a call to personal transformation... which is a lifelong discipline. Personal transformation in response to egoism. While 'egoism' is not a Biblical word, the idea is a central theme of Christian thought about the human condition and experience. Egoism means being centered on self and its fears and anxieties and preoccupations; what Thomas Merton called the "small self," the "superficial self," the "exterior self;" the "false self:" its concerns and desires. Alternately, the Ego is centered on the "accomplished self," the "successful self:" our achievements. Importantly, the problem is *not* that being a self is bad, rather the issue is: the kind of self that I am, that you are, that we are. Good Friday *and* Easter, death *and* resurrection together are the central image in the New Testament for the path to the *transformed self*.

The path involves dying to an old way of being and being reborn into a new way of being – like the chick in the egg: new life demands shattering the old. Good Friday *and* Easter are about this path, the path of dying *and* rising – of being born again:

"Unless the grain of wheat falls to the earth and dies, it remains but a grain of wheat..., it cannot bear fruit."

So, sisters and brothers, the Easter message is Good News for our souls: we don't have to stay stuck in the chains, the mud, the fear of our Good Friday! True encounter with the risen Christ liberates something within us:

- ❖ a power we did not know we had;
- ❖ a hope; ...a capacity for love;
- ❖ a resilience;
- ❖ an ability to bounce back when we thought we were completely defeated;
- ❖ a capacity to grow... to change;
- ❖ a power – a creative transformation!

Throughout Lent here at All Saints we were invited to identify our fears – writing them on slips of paper which were placed in the large purple bowl beneath the banner calling us to “Be not afraid.” As part of our Easter Vigil ritual, we burned those slips of paper... and if you look closely at the bowl now, you will see beautiful blossoms growing out of the ashes of those burned slips of paper!

For the Christian there is *no ultimate defeat* – because *Christ is risen* and lies deep within us and has overcome all that seeks to destroy us or break our human spiritual growth... *if we dare dig deep enough into our hearts.*

+++++

Sisters and brothers, this is the point when most Easter homilies come to an end... (and you might be saying at this point: “Thank God!”) ... but if we are going to be faithful to the full meaning of Easter there is another transformation that is required and that is: Easter means that God's great clean-up of *the world* has begun! ... but it will not continue without us.....!

The Easter transformation goes beyond personal transformation: we experience the Resurrection of Jesus when we *love one another*. As Peter Daino said on Holy Thursday: when we receive the Body of Christ we, in a sense, are “eating the resurrection,” dreaming of the world that God intended.

Again we see the Good Friday–Easter dynamic: what Jesus was passionate about led to his execution; his passion – fire – for God's great clean-up of the world, led to his suffering and execution on the Cross as a victim of capital punishment. His passion was the Kingdom of God, the reign of God; ...*what life would be like on earth if God was King and the rulers, domination systems and empires of the world were not!* It is the world that the prophets dreamed of, a world of justice in which everyone has enough and systems are fair! This is not simply a political dream, it is God's dream: a dream that can only be realized by being grounded ever more deeply in the Reality of God – whose heart is justice. Jesus' passion got him killed, but God vindicated Justice! This is the global meaning of Good Friday *and* Easter: Easter reverses Good Friday! Easter is God's vindication of Jesus' passion for the Kingdom of God, for God's justice and is a resounding “NO” to the powers who killed him, powers that still are very much active in our world. Easter means that God's great clean-up has begun: a clean-up addressing the Crucifixion of our Mother-Earth, nationalism, patriarchy, sexism, racism, homophobia, ableism – Systems of Domination everywhere and of all kinds.

What does Easter mean to us as disciples of Jesus on Easter 2019? Our personal transformation from our Good Friday *to* Easter *renews us and rallies us to join in God's great clean-up of the world!*

And so, sisters and brothers, Easter is the Celebration of Resurrection: of personal transformation *and* global transformation – one leads to the other!

And we have great role-models:

- ❖ Without his ongoing personal transformation, Dietrich Bonhoeffer would not have had the freedom and courage to engage in a conspiracy against Hitler within Nazi Germany itself;
- ❖ without their ongoing personal transformations, the four church women in El Salvador would not have dared stay with the poor – bringing about their ultimate martyrdom;
- ❖ without his ongoing personal transformation, Desmond Tutu would not have been able to oppose apartheid while in jail, with such courage, infectious joy and reconciling spirit;
- ❖ without her ongoing personal transformation, the martyr Sister Dorothy Stang would never have been able to challenge the landowners destroying the rain forests in Brazil;
- ❖ without his ongoing personal transformation, Martin Luther King, Jr. could not have “kept on, keepin’ on” in the midst of all the threats that he faced;
- ❖ and without their ongoing personal transformation our Guillaume, GuyGuy, Valentine and Daniela Lufungula would never have survived the four year journey from death threats in Congo to our Parish Annex here at All Saints!

+++++

“God of Life, we celebrate the empty tomb of your son — your ultimate promise of hope, of life, of love to humanity. May the joy of this night give us the grace and hope to abandon the tombs we create for ourselves and bring the resurrection into this life of ours; to renew and re-create our world in the light of the Risen Christ; to proclaim in every moment of our lives the Gospel of the Holy One: Christ Jesus who has died, who has risen!”

Amen