

Dazzling Possibilities Abound!

When asked to describe the mystery of Easter, spiritual writer Carl Knudsen responded with a story:

“Years ago, an old city lamplighter was putting out streetlamps, one-by-one. (This was before there was electricity.) He was met by a reporter who asked him if he ever grew weary of his work. After all, it was a lonely job and the night was cold and damp.

“‘Never am I cheerless,’ said the old man; ‘for there is always a light ahead of me to lead me on.’

“‘But, what do you have to cheer you when you have put out the last light?’

“‘Then comes the dawn!’ said the lamplighter.”

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Sisters and brothers, what if the same question were put to Jesus? He put out one light after another:

- ❖ the lamp of popular acclaim
- ❖ the lamp of patriotic approval
- ❖ the lamp of ecclesiastical conformity

All for the sake of God’s love which burned his heart and showed him the WAY. In the end, even the light of his life was to flicker out on the hill called Calvary; we hear his voice: “Into your hands I commend my spirit...”

...and then came the Dawn!!!!

Resurrection: New Life – New Creation,

Resurrection: The loving Abba God bending over and breathing the Spirit back into his flesh,

Resurrection: The stone rolled back, an Angel appears!

Resurrection: “You are looking for Jesus crucified – be not afraid, he is not here; he has been raised from the dead!”

Resurrection: the women – the first disciples and evangelizes – run from the tomb proclaiming
the Word of resurrection;
the Word of life;
the Word of hope!

Yes: there is life after death!

Yes: there is life and light after all the darkness and evil and hatred and insanity!

Yes: the power of darkness and violence and evil is broken!

Light and Life and Love and... dazzling possibilities abound!!

... and dazzling possibilities abound!!!

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Sisters and brothers, dazzling possibilities abound *because* this Easter night, we gather with Communities of Faith around the world to – yes – celebrate that 2000 years ago our Jesus, our Messiah, our Liberator, our Redeemer rose from the dead, proving that he is God; *but* we don't stop there: tonight isn't just a nostalgic look back at the past. We gather this Easter night to proclaim to all the world *that we continue to experience the resurrection of Jesus – here and now – in the year 2015, in our hearts and in our world!*

Brothers and sisters, the risen Jesus *lives* within us and among us when *we love one another!*

This true and intimate encounter with the risen Jesus *awakens* something in the depth our being: a spark – a light – a fire!

This true and intimate encounter with the risen Jesus *liberates* a power within us and among us that we didn't know was there: a hope – a capacity for life – a resilience – an ability to bounce back when we thought we were completely defeated.

This true and intimate encounter with the risen Jesus – within us and among us – blossoms into
a capacity to grow...,
a capacity to change...,
a power of creative transformation!

For the Christian there is no defeat because Christ is risen and lives within and among us! A risen Christ who overcomes all that destroys... and dazzling possibilities abound: when we love one another!

One might be tempted to respond: dazzling possibilities...? Dazzling possibilities...? in a world that is bleeding and dying from violence and hatred and injustice and oppression? Dazzling possibilities...???

...in a Church that still is hurting people – driving people away – as the 810 responses to our survey on the Synod of the family so painfully reveal...? Dazzling possibilities, when so many folks are struggling just to get by...? Dazzling possibilities, for some of us who may be here tonight – hurt and aching-in-spirit, families and relationships broken...? Dazzling possibilities for our Mother Earth, dying from the savage destruction by the human species...? And the list goes on....

The reality among us might give us some doubts...

Sisters and brothers, everything that we are about here tonight is a resounding acclamation that dazzling possibilities are blossoming within and among us – as sure as the spring will ultimately overcome this long harsh winter! As the saying goes: you can step on a flower, but... you can't hold back the spring!

So if that is the case, how about some examples? With the Gospels in one hand, I took up the New York Times in the other.

1) Back in January 2008, I was privileged along with many others, to attend the Inauguration of President Obama. In his 1st Inaugural Address, the President reached out to our enemies, offering to “extend a hand, if you are willing to unclench your fist.” On this past Thursday – Holy Thursday – it was announced that the global negotiations with Iran, that began as a spark two years ago, are beginning to bear fruit... fingers on all sides are loosening and, although there is a long way to go, prospects that a handshake is forthcoming is, at this moment, very good.

From a Christian perspective, if we can let go of our political polarities for a moment, *negotiation* rather than *war* to limit nuclear armaments *is* Resurrection..., yes! Dazzling possibilities abound..., yes!

2) Last week religious leaders and activists surrounded Gov. Mark Pence in Indiana as he signed a Bill that under the guise of “religious freedom” would protect so-called religious business owners from having to provide cakes and flowers for same-sex weddings, in other words: a Bill that would open the door for legal discrimination against our LGBT sisters and brothers. Within hours, outcry across the nation was loud and clear, and within days the law was changed to specify that it would not authorize discrimination because of sexual orientation or gender identity! Sisters and brothers, just a few years ago, such a moral outcry would have been unimaginable – but the spark of this outcry was birthed 30 years ago in the Stonewall Tavern in the East Village in New York City: Resurrection..., Yes! Dazzling possibilities abound..., yes!

3) Then I picked up the National Catholic Reporter and read that some environmental experts are predicting that 2015 may be the year that the global village truly awakens to the reality that Mother Earth is dying – that climate change is real and that drastic steps must be taken to save our planet. They point to the recent Global Summit in Latin America, the agreement between China and the US on air pollution and Pope Francis’ forthcoming Encyclical on ecology as hopeful signs; but let us remember the spark that has turned into a blazing fire was birthed by Rachel Carson’s book The Silent Spring – in the 1960s – when most of us didn’t have a clue. Little-by-little light overcomes darkness; the spark becomes a fire: Resurrection..., Yes! Dazzling possibilities abound..., yes!

4) And closer to home, I picked up our Bulletin and I was reminded of our Bishop Harrison Center. Five years ago when the Diocese informed us that they were selling the property along with the parking lot, our Parish struggled long and hard over what we should do... and today we have a beautifully renovated building ready to serve as a Center for Parish and Community activities – and soon, because of your generosity, the building will have an elevator to ensure that all our sisters and brothers have access: Resurrection..., Yes! Dazzling possibilities..., Yes!

And the list goes on...!

Sisters and brothers, the bottom line is that miracles can happen, little-by-little our capacity to grow, to change is sparked; the power of transformation works in our individual lives and in our world that so often seems to be stuck in the darkness. Miracles can happen – we can become the persons, the people, the world God intends: *if we love one another*.

My brothers and sisters, resurrection and dazzling possibilities are at the heart of what it means to call ourselves Christians; the heart of our Catholic Church at its best; and the heart of the community that Aaron and Danny are to be baptized into and with which Tina and Charles are being brought into full Communion this evening!

Pope Francis, in The Joy of the Gospel (¶ 276) tells us:

“Christ’s resurrection is not an event of the past; it contains a vital power which has permeated this world. Where all seems to be dead, signs of the resurrection suddenly spring up. It is an irresistible force. Often it seems that God does not exist: all around us we see persistent injustice, evil, indifference and cruelty. But it is also true that in the midst of darkness something new always springs to life and sooner or later produces fruit. On razed land life breaks through, stubbornly yet invincibly. However dark things are, goodness always re-emerges and spreads. Each day in our world beauty is born anew, it rises transformed through the storms of history. Values always tend to reappear under new guises, and human beings have arisen time after time from situations that seemed doomed. Such is the power of the resurrection, and all who evangelize are instruments of that power. “

Resurrection... Yes!

Dazzling possibilities abound... Yes!

Amen! Alleluia!