5th Sunday of Lent All Saints Parish April 5 & 6, 2014 Syracuse, NY S. Kathleen Osbelt

Creating Easter Moments

It was April, 1994. Twenty years ago but it’s one of those events that a person remembers like it happened yesterday.

At that time Earl was a resident at Francis House. When he came he was asked if he had any immediate living family member to which he responded, “No.” Then over the course of three weeks, Earl experienced a lot of love from the staff and volunteers which seemed to soften him, to open him. It seemed to touch him and change him, bringing something to rebirth. He admitted that he had a 34 year old daughter that he had not spoken many years.

We just heard the story of the resurrection of Lazarus. It’s the story of every believer. Just as Jesus loved Lazarus, so does Jesus love you. Similarly, just as Jesus wept for Lazarus so is Jesus fully and even emotionally invested in your well-being. Just as Lazarus was raised so every believer begins to live anew at baptism, and is given the grace to rise again throughout the small deaths and losses of life, until the final resurrection after death. As the Mass of Christian burial declares: “life is changed not taken away.”

Because love opened up Earl’s heart, he was beginning to once again reach for the new life that love brings. He was open to goodness, reconciliation, compassion, and to establishing right relationship with his daughter.

Earl told us the name of his daughter. And even though it had been over 12 years, she was still living locally and was willing to meet with her father. On the day that we arranged for her to come, Earl was rehearsing his apology and the presentation of flowers we had bought for the occasion. It was a tearful reunion followed by visits every couple of days. Earl died a very happy, resurrected man.

St. Paul, in the second reading, reminds us that we are to live in accordance with the Spirit of God who dwells within. A dynamic, unconditional love, the Spirit, is constantly urging us toward goodness, justice, peace and compassion. This Spirit, Jesus within us, is not content to be heeded only once in a while or when it’s convenient. On the contrary, the Sprit compels us to be the growth and transformation we want to experience in our world. If we are attentive to that Spirit, it will impact everything around us, not only our personal growth, but influence our economies, politics and all social encounters.

When Lazarus came forth, he was still wearing the cloths of a dead man. Jesus addressed the community: “Untie him and let him go free!” The community plays its part in helping Lazarus get unbound and emerge into the light of new life.

Jesus has the power to call us out of our tombs. We must ask ourselves: “What in me needs to be brought to new life, to be unbound, to be set free?”

And we, as a community, are called to help unbind those held in the tomb, those held back by prejudice, poverty, violence, or exclusion of any kind. Jesus has given us the power to bring back to life anyone who is broken, rejected, and lacking what is needed for a healthy life.

* Feeding the residents of Parkside Commons and helping to clean their environment
* Making sandwiches to feed hungry mouths
* Providing shelter for young men at risk in Kenya
* Training young women to be leaders in The Gambia
* Providing healthcare in Nicaragua
* Opening our community to our Congolese brothers and sisters and to whoever is looking for a place to find Jesus.

All are a part of the Resurrection story. The voice of Jesus calls us away from making the tomb our natural habitat. It also challenges us to take responsibility for our brother and sisters who like Lazarus, is loved by Jesus. Easter moments can happen in places/times we least expect.