

2 Easter, Year A: May 1, 2011

Alleluia! Christ is risen! / The Lord is risen indeed. Alleluia!

Well, it's Easter now. Will be for 50 days.
The Great Fifty Days, we call this period.
Of course not many people know this, or really pay attention to it.
"What do you mean?" they ask; "Isn't Easter just one special day?"
And of course the answer is "Yes and no."
"Yes," Easter *is* one special day,
the day we celebrate as Christ's victory over death and the grave
and consequently, as we sang last Sunday, our triumphant holy day, Alleluia!
But also "No," Easter is *not only* that one day:
however we may understand it,
the deliverance from sin and death achieved by Christ is so important to us
that we devote a whole *season* of the church to its celebration.
A full seven weeks of feasting, seven times seven being
the ancient representation of fullness, perfection, and completeness.

And so we begin each Sunday of these 50 days with this glad acclamation.
Alleluia! Christ is risen! / The Lord is risen indeed. Alleluia!
A few years ago I got a shock with this one Sunday;
an overlooked typo in the bulletin had us proudly announcing
Alleluia! *Chris* is risen!

But I thought, well, you know, that's fair.
It may be a typo, but I think it's accurate.
Christ *is* raised...and so are Ann and Michael and John and Angela.
Christ Incarnate is a human being, consubstantial with all other human beings.
He did not become simply an individual human person.
He became humankind – male and female.
He assumed the whole of human nature,
and now there is no humanity other than the one that Christ took on –
our humanity, in which all human beings participate,
whether or not they believe in Christ,
whether or not they recognize the nature of their humanity.
No humans are alien to Christ,
whether they be Hindu, Muslim, or Buddhist, Capitalist or Communist.
They share in Christ's humanity.
They are not members of the Body of Christ,
but they are not unrelated to Christ.

If that's not enough to make you want to shout, "Alleluia!" I don't know what is.

Furthermore, Christ the Incarnate One assumed flesh – organic, human flesh;
he was nurtured by air and water, vegetables and meat, like the rest of us.
He took matter into himself, so matter is not alien to him now.

*This sermon was written by The Rev. Theo Park and delivered at Christ Episcopal Church, Red Wing.
Fr. Theo thanks all those whose material he has borrowed and apologizes to those he has overlooked.*

His body is a *material* body – transformed, of course, but transformed *matter*.
Thus he shares his being with the whole created order:
animals and birds, snakes and worms, flowers and seeds.
Therefore all parts of creation are now reconciled to Christ.
The whole created order is to be set free
and to share in the glorious freedom of the children of God.
Sun, moon, and stars; earth, wind and waters;
pulsars and black holes and every living thing on the planet earth –
all are to participate in that final consumption of the redemption.
Thus in the gospel attributed to Thomas, Christ says
“Split a piece of wood and I will be there. Lift a rock and I will be there.”

If that’s not enough to make you want to shout, “Alleluia!” I don’t know what is.

You know, Thomas gets such a bum rap.
Before the resurrection appearance *all* the disciples are doubters!
All the men that is.
Thomas simply missed the big event and—pragmatist that he is—
can’t accept what he doesn’t experience.
Yet when Jesus does appear to Thomas,
and shows him that resurrected flesh does not transcend matter
even though it transforms it,
Thomas’ response goes far beyond Peter’s profession
that Jesus is the Messiah, the Christ:
Thomas is the only witness in all of the New Testament to recognize Jesus as God.

Indeed, the story of Thomas is the concluding episode of the Gospel of John
and his statement marks the *climax* of the Johannine evangelist’s Christology.
It loops us back around to the beginning, where, *in* the beginning,
the Word was with God and the Word was God,
the Word through whom everything that is was created and finds its existence,
the Word through whom all creation has been reconciled to God
and raised to new life *with* God.

Thomas sees this, knows this, and is moved to profound worship.

If that’s not enough to make you want to shout, “Alleluia!” I don’t know what is.

So when we baptize Stella today we will welcome her into Christ’s humanity—
his birth, his life, his death, his resurrection and ascension—
and thus into the organic decay and rebirth of the cosmos;
she will be washed with clear water drawn from the earth
and anointed with oil from the fruit of ancient olive trees
and fed with bread and wine, product of grain and grape;
and she will be raised, dedicated to new life
shared with protostars and green blades of grain.

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She will be wrapped in the love and the history of all of those who have gone before her and all of those who are present here today who make promises on her behalf. We will sing her the songs and tell her the stories and attempt to embody for her just what those promises mean until she is old enough to claim them for herself; until she possesses that desire to lay hold of something ultimate in life with the kind of assurance and confidence that can say:
“*This* is what holds my life together:
this is the foundation upon which everything I am and do is built.”

Until with Thomas and all creation she is able to say:
“My Lord and my God.”

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