

Commentary on Sunday Scripture – Year B

Easter Sunday

First reading:

(Acts 10.34, 37-43)

Peter Instructs Cornelius

Peter was speaking to Cornelius. Cornelius was the Roman centurion who already revered God and had had a vision that he should invite Peter to come and instruct him.

Peter shows that Jesus was a real human being. He went about, bringing God's peace to everyone he could meet. Nevertheless, he was executed as a criminal. So God reacted by raising him from death to a life that was totally new. This was the fulfilment of all the promises made to Israel, bringing to completion God's plan in creation. Life moved into a new gear. Peter expresses this that God has appointed the Risen Jesus to judge the living and the dead.

The Jews expected that at the end of time, at the completion of all things, God would come to set everything to rights, to judge things according to their true worth. Now Peter says that Jesus is the one who will be this judge. Jesus is the Lord who will bring all things to completion and to judgment. By his rising from the dead, Jesus comes to this position of supreme authority over the whole world. Paul put it that he was 'constituted Son of God in power' by the Resurrection.

Question:

What do you find the most encouraging aspect of Easter?

Second reading:

(Philippians 2.6-11)

Colossians 3.1-4

This reading is the visible tip of an iceberg, of which much more lies below the surface! Paul here tells us that all our interest must be in heavenly things, the things of Christ, because we share Christ's life. What is more, that life is no ordinary life. What does all this mean?

We share Christ's life because faith in Christ means that we put all our trust and hope in Christ. We have been baptized into Christ, that is, by baptism we have been dipped into Christ as into a river, and come up soaked with Christ, or dripping with Christ. I am growing into Christ, share his inheritance, his status as son of God. The wellspring of my life is no longer the ordinary, natural life that enables me to live, breathe, digest, feel, see, sing and play, love and hate. It is the Spirit of Christ that spurs me to generosity, service, kindness, self-control, peace and openness.

This life, says Paul, is still hidden, and will be fully manifested only at the coming of Christ. But if I am to be true to my profession of faith in baptism, the principles on which I operate must be those of this risen life of Christ.

Question:

How can I help non-Christians to appreciate the wonder of Easter?

Commentary on Sunday Scripture – Year B

Gospel

(John 20.1-9)

The Empty Tomb

There are several accounts in the various gospels of the discovery of the empty tomb. The slight variations between them show all the marks of oral tradition, for in genuine oral tradition each 'performance' is different. Different people tell the story slightly differently, stressing different aspects.

This story stresses the proof that the tomb really was empty, for the apostles examine the evidence carefully. Other accounts concentrate less on the evidence and more on the message, that they will meet the Risen Lord in Galilee.

It was important to establish that the tomb was empty, to prevent the charge that the meetings with the Risen Christ were simply ghost appearances. Apart from the proof that this was a real, living and bodily person, these meetings stress two factors: the power of the Risen Christ and the commission given to the disciples. They are to go out into the whole world and spread the message, always accompanied by and strengthened by Christ himself. In this account, Simon Peter is clearly the senior, authority figure, to whom the Beloved Disciple defers. But it is the love of the Beloved Disciple that immediately brings him to faith.

Question:

Is the empty tomb the chief evidence for the Resurrection?
