

RESURREXIT SICUT DIXIT! ALLELUIA! ALLELUIA! HE IS RISEN AS HE SAID! ALLELUIA! ALLELUIA!

I remind you of the tradition of the RISUS PASCHALIS, or Easter joke, which came about because God played the biggest joke of all time on the devil. On Good Friday, the devil thought he had won, and evil had overcome good. But on Easter Sunday the tables were turned. The resurrection reversed everything. Here is a piece called EVERYTHING I EVER NEEDED TO KNOW I LEARNED FROM THE EASTER BUNNY. Don't put all your eggs in one basket. Walk softly and carry a big carrot. Everyone needs a friend who is all ears. There's no such thing as too much candy. All work and no play can make you a basket case. Everyone is entitled to a bad hare day. Let happy thoughts multiply like rabbits. Some body parts should be floppy. Keep your paws off other people's jelly beans. The grass is always greener in someone else's basket. An Easter bonnet can tame even the wildest hare. To show your true colors you have to come out of your shell. (Email from Claire Mistretta)

Timothy Keller captures the significance of Easter: "If Jesus rose from the dead, then we have to accept all that He said; if He didn't rise from the dead, then why worry about any of what He said? The issue on which everything hangs is not whether or not we like His teaching but whether or not He rose from the dead." (THE REASON FOR GOD: BELIEF IN AN AGE OF SKEPTICISM).

The stone which rolled away from the tomb of Jesus continues to roll away from every sort of grave. Easter tells us that goodness cannot be held, captured, or put to death. It evades its pursuers, escapes capture, slips away, hides out, but forever rises, again and again, all over the world. Such is the meaning of the resurrection.

Goodness cannot be captured or killed. We see this already in the earthy life of Jesus. There are a number of passages in the Gospels which give the impression that Jesus was somehow highly elusive and difficult to capture. It seems that until Jesus consents to His own capture, nobody can lay a hand on Him. We see this played out a number of times: early on in His ministry, when His own townsfolk get upset with His message and lead Him to the brow of a hill to hurl Him to His death, we are told that "He slipped through the crowd and went away." Later another incident when He is in the temple area and they try to arrest Him, the text simply says that He left the temple area and "no one laid a hand upon Him because His hour had not yet come." Why the inability to take Him captive? Was Jesus so physically adept and elusive that no one could imprison Him?

These stories of His "slipping away" are highly symbolic. The lesson is not that Jesus was physically deft and elusive, but rather that the word of God, His grace, His goodness, and power can never be captured, held captive, or ultimately killed. They are adept. They can never be stopped, and even when seemingly they are killed, the stone that entombs them always eventually rolls back and releases them. Goodness continues to resurrect from every sort of grave.

And it is this, the constant resurrection of goodness, not that of viciousness and evil, which speaks the deepest truth about our world and our lives. It is the truth of resurrection, the truth we celebrate every Easter. The Jewish-Hungarian writer, Imre Kertesz, who won the Nobel Prize for literature in 2002, gives a poignant testimony of this. As a young boy he had been in a Nazi death camp, but what he remembered most afterwards from this experience was not the injustice, cruelty, and death that he saw there, but rather the acts of goodness, kindness, and altruism he witnessed amidst all the evil. After the war, it left him wanting to read the lives of saints rather than biographies of war. The appearance of goodness fascinated him. To his mind,

evil is explicable, but goodness? Who can explain it? What is its source? Why does it spring up over and over again all over the earth, and in every kind of situation?

It springs up everywhere because God's goodness and power lie at the source of all being and life. This is what is revealed in the resurrection of Jesus. The resurrection is the ultimate source of all that is, of all being and life, is gracious, good, and loving. Moreover it also reveals that graciousness, goodness, and love are the ULTIMATE POWER inside reality. They will have the final word and they will never be captured, derailed, killed, or ultimately ignored. They will break through, ceaselessly, forever. In the end, too, as Imre Kertesz suggests, they are more fascinating than evil.

Which means that we are in safe hands. Always. No matter how bad the news, no matter how threatened our lives are on a given day, no matter how intimidating the neighborhood or global bully, no matter how unjust and cruel a situation, and no matter how omnipotent anger and hatred seem to be, love and goodness will reappear and ultimately triumph.

Jesus taught that the source of all life and being is benign and loving. He promised too that our end will be benign and loving. In the resurrection of Jesus, God showed that God has the power to deliver on that promise. Goodness and love will triumph! The ending of our story, both that of our world and that of our individual lives, is already written – and it is a happy ending! We are already saved. Goodness is guaranteed. Kindness will meet us. We only need to live in the face of that wonderful truth.

They couldn't arrest Jesus, until He Himself allowed it. They put His dead body in a tomb and sealed it with a stone, but the stone rolled away. His disciples abandoned Him in His trials, but they eventually returned more committed than ever. They persecuted and killed His first disciples, but that only served to spread His message. The churches have been unfaithful sometimes, but God just slipped away from those particular temple precincts. God has been declared dead countless times, but a billion people are celebrating Easter today. Goodness cannot be killed. This is our Easter faith. (adapted from Rolheiser, posting of 3/28/2016)

Second, Easter is our great source of hope. It lifts our tired spirits when we struggle. It is hope for our broken relationships, our shattered dreams and for our broken lives. It even inspires us to attempt the impossible. Many of us must make this attempt whether we want to or not. Overcoming a handicap, battling an addiction, coping with declining health or chronic pain, handling a family crisis, even getting an education or searching for a new job – these sometimes seem like impossible challenges.

But the Easter promise of new life in Christ invigorates our spirits. It brings us to that place of renewed commitment, unshakable confidence, which is necessary for us to prevail. It keeps us fighting on against all odds, refusing to quit when the going gets tough, coming back after each discouragement and defeat more determined than ever to succeed. Easter enables us to make the motto of the Special Olympics our own: "Let me win. But if I cannot win, Let me be brave in the attempt."

In his book THE UNEXPECTED UNIVERSE, Loren Eisely tells of walking the beach in Costabel. Struck by how the tidal plain was littered with the dying debris of sea life, he felt special sympathy for the starfish, their breathing spores stuffed with sand, who could not fight their way back to the water because the surf would cast them repeatedly back upon the shore. Amid this scene of death and despair, Eisely came upon a man who was a star-thrower. The man walked the beach picking up the dying starfish and, one after another, tossed them as far as he could out to the sea. Eisely watched him for a time, fascinated by his effort to give hope to the dying. He approached him – and asked: "I've been watching you – and I admire your effort – but

you are not going to make much difference with all the starfish littered about this gigantic expanse of beach.” The man picked up another starfish and hurled it out to sea. “It made a difference for that one.” And I joined him. Later, having pondered the meaning of the experience, Eisely wrote, “Somewhere....there is a hurler of stars, and he walks, because he chooses, always in desolation, but never in defeat.”

The risen Christ is a star-thrower. And as His disciples, we are called to be star-throwers. Having conquered death and despair Himself, Christ’s ongoing mission is to help others do the same. Bonding with Him enables us to meet life’s challenges with confidence and resilience. Each day becomes an opportunity to transcend our limits, and that means no more boredom. Instead, the promise of His presence brings renewal to the dullest routine.

Assured of death’s defeat, we have a reason to live. The hope of resurrection dispels futility. Knowing that the grave is not our final destiny, we find meaning here and now. We are not afraid that our time in this world is “a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing.”

Easter sheds light on the conversation Don Quixote had with Sancho Panza in the movie MAN OF LA MANCHA. Quixote is reminiscing about the soldiers who have died in his arms. In remembering their agony, he recalled feeling that they wanted him to answer a haunting question. Sancho asks, “Was it the question ‘Why am I dying?’” “No,” Quixote replies, “it was the question ‘Why was I living?’”

Many people in our age have no satisfying answer to this question. Some find themselves trapped in careers or marriages or religious understandings that once made sense but no longer do. Others have ridden their talents into the glittering skies of material success, only to ask, Is this all there is? Still others are plagued by self-doubt after tasting death or defeat. Carl Jung spoke of these hurting people in MODERN MAN IN SEARCH OF A SOUL, where he said, “About a third of my cases are suffering from no clinically definable neurosis, but from the senselessness and emptiness of their lives.”

Easter offers an answer because it infuses life with purpose. If we believe that death is not as much an ending as a beginning, we incorporate the positive spirit of that affirmation into our goals and relationships, our attitudes and lifestyle. The gratitude we feel over the victory of the Resurrection spills over into our outlook on life. We refuse to be cynical about today because the empty tomb reminds us of the new tomorrow God is preparing. In the light of Easter, our purpose is no longer limited to this world; we live in the here and now as citizens of the there and then. Bearing witness to the kingdom of God, as Jesus did, becomes our passion. We become hurlers of stars. (adapted from FROM SACRIFICE TO CELEBRATION: A LENTEN JOURNEY, Evan Drake Howard, p. 89-91) RESURREXIT SICUT DIXIT! ALLELUIA! ALLELUIA! HE IS RISEN AS HE SAID! ALLELUIA! ALLELUIA!