

RESURREXIT SICUT DIXIT! ALLELUIA! ALLELUIA!

HE IS RISEN AS HE SAID! ALLELUIA! ALLELUIA!

OK, your RISUS PASCHALIS, or Easter joke, which came about because God played the biggest joke of all time on the devil. The devil thought he had won on Good Friday. But Easter Sunday was God's big joke on Satan. So here you go.

From a list of actual notations on hospital medical charts:

She has no rigors or shaking chills, but her husband states she was very hot in bed last night.

On the 2nd day the knee was better, and on the third day, it disappeared.

The patient has been depressed since she began seeing me in 2003.

The patient refused autopsy.

The patient has no previous history of suicides.

She is numb from her toes down.

I saw your patient today, who is still under our car for physical therapy.

The patient was to have a bowel resection. However, he took a job as a stockbroker instead.

Patient has 2 teenage children, but no other abnormalities.

It's no accident that when Jesus rose from the dead He appeared first to women. Why? During His pre-resurrection ministry, at least so it seems, He called mainly men to be the principal actors. Why a certain reversal at the resurrection? The smart-aleck answer is that Jesus knew that women couldn't keep a secret!

We can only speculate, but one reason might be that women are midwives. Something new is being born in the resurrection and women are the ones who attend to birth.

That's a metaphor worth reflecting on, not just in terms of the importance of women in ministry, but especially in terms of how we are all, women and men alike, called to respond to the resurrection, namely, by becoming midwives of hope and trust.

And it's a needed vocation because all of us, perpetually, are in the agony of struggling to give birth to hope and trust. Why?

Because we've all been wounded by betrayal, abuse, broken promises, broken relationships, and empty words. By the time we reach adulthood there is enough disillusionment in us to make it natural to say: "Why should I trust you? Why should I trust anybody? Why should I believe this? How is anything different this time? I always get burned in the end!" The older we get, the harder it is to hope and trust and the easier it is to become skeptical and cynical.

Yet none of us wants to be this way. Something inside us wants to trust, to hope, to believe in the goodness of things, to again feel that trustful enthusiasm we once had as a child, when we were innocent (and 'innocent' means 'unwounded'), when we could still take another's hand in trust. No one wants to be outside the circle of trust.

But it's a struggle, an agony of sorts, as we know. We'd like to trust, but often we can't give birth to it. That's where a midwife can be helpful.

When a baby is born, normally the head pushes its way through the birth canal first, opening the way for the body to follow. A good midwife can be very helpful at this time, doing everything from giving support, through giving reassurance, through giving instruction, through teaching how to breathe, through actively helping to pull the new life through the birth canal. Her help can sometimes mean the difference between life and death, and it always makes the birth easier and healthier.

That's also true for trust and hope. A good midwife can be helpful in bringing these to birth. What can she bring that's helpful? Insight, support, reassurance, certain spiritual 'breathing exercises', and experienced hands that can, if necessary, help pull the new child through the birth canal.

And one of the things a midwife of hope needs to do is what Jesus did when He met people, women and men alike, after His resurrection. He sent them back to "Galilee" where He promised they would re-find their hope and trust. What is "Galilee"?

In the gospels, "Galilee" is more than a geographical place. It's a place of the heart: the place of falling in love, of first fervor, of being inflamed with high ideals, of walking on water because one is naïve and trustful enough to believe that this is possible. "Galilee" is the place we were before our hearts and ideals got crucified, the place inside us where trust and hope are gestated.

A good midwife of hope, like Jesus on the morning of the resurrection, invites people to "Galilee." How? Here's an example. The famed American educator, Allan Bloom, tells a story of how a particular distasteful incident in a classroom once helped change forever the way he teaches. Sitting in a lecture hall as an undergraduate, he felt assaulted by a professor who began his class with these words: "You come here with your small-town, parochial biases, your naivete; well, I'm going to bathe you in great truth and set you free!"

Bloom remarks how this reminded him of a boy who had very solemnly informed him when he was 7 that there was no Santa Claus or Easter Bunny. This was no great truth, just an invitation to cynicism, like the professor's comment. Reflecting on this, Bloom resolved to forever teach in exactly the opposite way. He would begin his classes this way: "You come here with your many experiences and your sophistication; well, I respect that, but I'm going to try to teach you how to believe in Santa Claus and the Easter Bunny again – and then maybe you'll have some chance to be happy!"

The resurrection of Jesus is about more than believing in Santa and the Easter Bunny, but, even so, Bloom's pedagogy tells us something about what it means to go back to "Galilee" and give birth to trust in our lives.

Somewhere in life we lose the child in us and lose the trust and hope that go with that. It's a painful struggle to give birth to trust again and, in that struggle, a midwife of hope, someone who believes in the resurrection, can indeed be a wonderful friend. (from Ronald Rolheiser, *THE PASSION AND THE CROSS*, p. 94-96)

And a story of how a man became a midwife of hope. Dennis Linn is a Christian counselor. He once had a very stern image of God, a cold, unyielding image.

But one day a woman named Hilda came to him crying because her son had tried to commit suicide for the 4th time. She told him that her son was involved in prostitution, drug dealing and murder. She ended her list of her son's 'big sins' with, "What bothers me most is that my son says he wants nothing to do with God. What will happen to my son if he commits suicide without repenting and wanting nothing to do with God?" Since at the time Linn's image of God was this stern unyielding judge, he thought, "God will probably send your son to hell." But he didn't want to tell Hilda that. He was glad that his training had taught him to ask, "What do you think?"

Hilda replied, "I think that when you die, you appear before the judgment seat of God. If you have lived a good life, God will send you to heaven. If you have lived a bad life, God will send you to hell." Sadly, she concluded, "Since my son has lived such a bad life, if he were to die without repenting, God would certainly send him to hell." Although Linn tended to agree with her, he didn't want to say, "Right on, Hilda! Your son probably would be sent to hell." He was again grateful for his theological training which taught him a second strategy: when you don't know how to solve a theological problem, then let God solve it. So he said to Hilda, "Close your eyes. Imagine that you are sitting next to the judgment seat of God. Imagine also that your son has died with all these serious sins and without repenting. Your son has just arrived at the judgment seat of God. Squeeze my hand when you can imagine that."

A few minutes later Hilda squeezed his hand. She described to him the entire judgment scene. Then he asked her, "Hilda, how does your son feel?" Hilda answered, "My son feels so lonely and empty." He asked Hilda what she would do. She said, "I want to throw my arms around my son." She lifted her arms and began to cry as she imagined herself holding her son tightly.

Finally, when she had stopped crying, Dennis Linn asked her to look into God's eyes and watch what God wanted to do. In her imagination Hilda saw God step down from the throne, and just as Hilda did, embrace Hilda's son. And the 3 of them, Hilda, her son, and God, cried together and held one another.

Linn was stunned. What Hilda taught him, he says, in those few minutes is the bottom line of healthy Christian spirituality: God loves us at least as much as the person who loves us the most.

I have not the slightest doubt in the world that God loves Judas. After all, God never gives up on us. Jesus forgave everyone from the cross. "Father, forgive them; they know not what they do." We should never give up hope and trust. Our loving God is forever reliable. He keeps His promises. Amen. (adapted from GOOD GOATS: HEALING OUR IMAGE OF GOD by Dennis, Sheila and Matthew Linn, p. 8-11)