

Easter 2016 C We should be on our knees
Fr. Frank Schuster

This morning, we celebrate John's account of the resurrection. "On the first day of the week, Mary of Magdala came to the tomb early in the morning while it was still dark, and saw the stone removed from the tomb. She runs back to tell Simon Peter. Last night at the vigil, we celebrated Luke's account of the resurrection which was similar. "Mary Magdalene, Joanna and Mary the mother of James and others brought spices to anoint Jesus' body only to discover in shock that the stone had been moved, the Lord's tomb was empty. Two angels appear and tell them, 'Why do you seek the living one among the dead. He is not here, but he has been raised'".

What is immediately captivating for me is this: Christianity is the only religion that when judging its veracity it is dependent on a moment in history, a second in time. For a discerning analytical reader of these texts, either Jesus rose from the dead or he didn't. There are no other options. If he didn't rise from the dead, Christians are the greatest of fools. If Jesus did rise from the dead, then he is Lord and God. There are no other options. Either this is the greatest hoax in the history of the human race or we should be on our knees. All the Gospels are in agreement that when Jesus was arrested, his disciples fled. This is the worst propaganda you can think up. This is not a great headline, news flash, disciples flee. The Gospels are in agreement that the women who came to the tomb were doing so in grief, to anoint his body. Again, this is not a stunning declaration of faith. And then the unexpected happened, this very large stone was somehow moved from the entrance and the tomb was empty.

The same disciples who fled hours before were now in the town square announcing the resurrection at great personal risk. These were fishermen, not fanatics, so people listened to them. These women likewise were intelligent and well respected. They too were in the town square announcing the resurrection at great personal risk, only hours after they brought spices to the tomb. It wasn't long before Christianity spread throughout the Roman Empire, even though being a Christian carried a death sentence. After three centuries of horrible persecution, Christianity triumphed and became the official state religion of the Roman Empire under Constantine. Today there are over two billion Christians worldwide, 1.2 billion are Roman Catholic. And yet, it fascinates me that Christianity is the only religion that its veracity is dependent on a moment of history, a second in time. Something happened this day. Something happened that changed the history of the world forever. That something is this: not only did Jesus die for us; Jesus actually rose from the dead and appeared to his followers just like he said he would. And this means, my friends, we should be on our knees.

We take time each year to celebrate Holy Week. We do so to actively remember the events that are central to our faith. There is a wonderful Greek word that is used to define memory. This Greek word is anamnesis. That is a great word isn't it? Anamnesis. Let's say it together. Anamnesis. The word literally means, do not forget. On Holy Thursday, when Jesus instituted the Eucharist, transforming the Passover meal by transubstantiating the unleavened bread into his body and the cup of wine into his blood, he commanded his disciples to do this in remembrance of me. The word remembrance here, again, in the original Greek is anamnesis. The Greek for remembrance is therefore more forceful. Jesus is telling us: do not forget.

The Liturgy these past several days have been a celebration of anamnesis. We remembered how our salvation consisted not in Jesus seizing power for himself but rather by giving up his power, becoming our paschal lamb. We remembered that greatness in the spirit life is not defined by seeking honors or special status. Rather, we were confronted with a Lord who washes his disciples' feet and commands that we do the likewise for one another.

This morning, the Church gives us St. Peter's sermon in the Acts of the Apostles. Not long after denying Jesus three times, there he is in the public square risking his neck proclaiming Jesus Christ has risen; and through him we have forgiveness of our sins.

In our second reading, St. Paul tells us what Jesus' resurrection means for those who would be Jesus' disciples. He says to the Colossians, "Brothers and sisters: If then you were raised with Christ, seek what is above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Think of what is above, not of what is on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ your life appears, then you too will appear with him in glory."

This morning, the Church gives us the Gospel of John who tells us, "On the first day of the week, Mary of Magdala came to the tomb early in the morning while it was still dark, and saw the stone removed from the tomb. She runs back to tell Simon Peter. And the world has never been the same since.

And so, these last several days have been a celebration of anamnesis. Can anyone here tell me what the opposite of anamnesis is? If anamnesis means literally "to not forget", am-ne-sus means "to forget". This is where we get the word amnesia. The spiritual challenge that is given to us this Easter is to not develop amnesia when it comes to this very specific spiritual truth. Either Jesus rose from the dead or he didn't. If he rose from the dead, then we should be on our knees. This is because the resurrection of the Lord boils down to singular message for you this morning and it is this: God loves you. God will go to hell and back for you. God has invited you through Jesus Christ to live eternally in the joy

of His presence. God expects you to share his love to the world around you in a spirit of humble service. God has given you this life changing message. There is only one question that remains: what will be our response?