

The World's Big Night – Easter C

Hallelujah, Christ is risen! The Lord is risen indeed! The modern day Polish Easter greeting is *Wesołego Alleluja*, “Happy Happiness.” In olden times there would be an exchange amongst the faithful: *Chrystus Zmartwychwstał!*, “Christ is risen” to which one would respond, *Prawdziwie zmartwychwstał!* “Truly He is risen.” And there are others. One that expresses the ebullient universality of the day is *Wesołych świąt Wielkiej Nocy* which, roughly translated, means “Happy World’s Big Night!” And finally, a personal favorite is *Wesołych Świąt, smacznego jajka i mokrego dyngusa!* “Happy Easter, a tasty egg and a wet Monday come tumbling after.”

Welcome to church on this fine and glorious Easter morning. As the psalmist insists, “This is the day the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it.” For God so loved the world, that he sent his only begotten child into the world to do whatever was necessary to appeal to humankind in the name of peace. Preaching wasn’t sufficient, even healing wasn’t sufficient. But overcoming death – now that made the joyful noise heard around the world, a sound that reverberates here in this place on this Easter morning and forevermore.

As the women ran from the empty tomb to tell their friends, so we turn to one another and say, “Happy Easter!” As a wag once wrote of the origins of Jewish holidays, “They tried to kill us, they failed; let’s eat!”

“For you have been a refuge to the needy in their distress, a shelter from the rainstorm and a shade from the heat. When the blast of the ruthless was like a winter rainstorm, the noise of enemies like heat in a dry place, you subdued the heat with the shade of clouds; the song of the ruthless was stilled.

“On this mountain, the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wines, of rich food filled with marrow, of well-aged wines strained clear. Then the Lord God will wipe away the tears from all faces, and the disgrace of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the Lord has spoken.

What are these terrible storms and noisy enemies? We each have our own list, that includes anything and everything that keeps us from lives of peace and joy, from a society that is just and orderly. Our job, as thinking, caring people is to see that this list is searching and fearless and as complete as we can make it, so that everything that separates us from the Spirit of Good is recognized, named and challenged. As Richard Rohr observes, “Christ crucified is all of the hidden, private, tragic pain of history made public and given over to God.”

And what are the rich foods that Isaiah extols, rich foods filled with marrow, and well-aged wines strained clear? “Christ resurrected is all of our private,

ungrieved, unnoted suffering received, loved and transformed by an all-caring God. How else could we have any kind of cosmic hope? How else could we not die of sadness for what humanity has done to itself and to one another?" "Jesus is the pattern and the plan of Creation in one life and one moment of history, when the meaning of each of our lives and all of history is revealed. The cross is the emblem of what we do to one another and to God. The resurrection is the banner of what God does to us in return."

"All through the Bible, in both Torah and Gospels," writes Madeleine L'Engle, "comes the message of blessing, and that it is the vocation of the people of God to bless as well as to be blessed, and to turn away wrath with a soft answer—a softness that is not flabby, but which has the power of meekness. Easter is the most brilliant of all blessings. It is almost too brilliant to be contemplated, like looking directly into the sun, which every schoolchild knows is foolhardy, we are burned and blinded by the source of life immortal."

"I have seen the Lord," exclaims Mary. She believes, because she has seen the Lord. Therefore, we're having a party. These confirmed, corroborated and celebrated sightings of Jesus by his followers change only one thing in the nature of our existence, but that one change changes everything.

Our earthly lives are one of God's most precious commodities, God's currencies. How much of this

priceless substance is misspent in sadness, self-destruction and violence – each day’s news brings us stories of more, and a drive by any veterans’ cemetery gives us a glimpse at the truth.

But today we know for certain that the power of goodness continues beyond earthly life, beyond human folly. It is not gone from our hearts, even when things are out of our hands. Because Jesus was lifted up, so can we be also. We can become citizens of a different society, another culture from the one we have grown used to. Our glad response to God’s invitation puts us in this realm of becoming. Our desire to be connected with that which is timeless is fulfilled continually in the living Christ. Our hearts can now have a sense of connectedness and hope, our voices can now sing psalms that say, “We shall not die; we shall live and declare the works of the Lord.”

So, whether we rise up saying *Wesołego wielkiej nocy*, or “Welcome happy morning,” the truth of this day persists beyond our imaginings: Hallelujah, Christ is risen. The Lord is risen indeed.