

Easter Day -April 5, 2015

All they to whom that water came were saved

Readings: Acts 10:34, 37-43; 1 Cor. 5: 6-8; Luke 24:1-12

Cathedral of St. Paul - 10:00 a.m.

I begin by offering to all of you a heartfelt welcome to the Cathedral, especially to our visitors. We are delighted you are all here this morning. *I saw water flowing from the right side of the temple, alleluia; and all they to whom that water came were saved, and they shall say, alleluia, alleluia.*¹

These words, which you will hear sung in a few minutes, come from the Sprinkling Rite, given pride of place during the Easter Sunday liturgy. It serves as a tangible reminder of the waters into which we have all been baptized, the waters that represent the very cleansing of our souls so that we may be pleasing in God's sight on this joyous day.

My experience has taught me something else- I ought to forewarn you- you are going to get a little wet! It is not my intention to make anyone cringe- it's part of the Liturgy! Would you please forgive me in advance? Each one of us desires to please God, even those who may not explicitly be aware of this. We seek the good, not only for ourselves, but also for those whom we love. Known by its ancient name, *Vidi Aquam*, the words are lifted from the prophet Ezekiel and Psalm 118, and the Rite has roots in the early Middle Ages.

"I saw water flowing from the right side of the temple ... and all to whom that water came were saved, and they sang- Alleluia." We Christians see in the "right side" a foreshadowing of Good Friday- Jesus on the Cross. The superabundant stream flowing from the temple transforms dry land into fertile and lush ground. It is symbolic of the return to the condition in the Garden of Eden before the Fall of Adam and Eve. Water signifies great blessings, just as dryness signifies a curse.²

¹ Vidi aquam egredientem de templo, a latere dextro, alleluia:

Et omnes, ad quos pervenit aqua ista, salvi facti sunt, et dicent, alleluia, alleluia.

² See Genesis 2:10-14 and Ezekiel 26:5, 14

If Lent has taught us anything, it is that we are in desperate need of a new start; we desire to hear the comforting words of absolution, to know that we are pleasing in God's sight. Why do so many come to confession in Lent? We want to be cleansed. Why did more than 100 people show up the day before Palm Sunday to clean the Church? Surely, we did so out of a love for God and respect for God's House, and the 100th anniversary made it even more special. While "Cleanliness is next to Godliness," we really come to Church so that our souls may be renewed and refreshed.

We have said definitively this day that death simply cannot be the end of everything. Jesus Christ has saved and set us free. He has returned, not merely in the minds of his disciples, but in flesh and blood. The burial cloths were scattered on the ground, the tomb was empty, and the angel declared, "Do not be amazed...He has been raised; he is not here."

On Good Friday the centurion stood facing Jesus on the Cross and when he saw that he thus breathed his last said: 'Truly this man was the Son of God!' What is our response today? If a nameless Roman army officer, merely doing his duty, can recognize in Jesus his divinity, how much more should we hail him as our Risen Lord so many centuries later? This Son has now risen.

The spear, an instrument of torture, has brought forth blood and water, symbolic of both Baptism and the Holy Eucharist. The emptiness of the tomb serves to remind us that the whole world's space cannot hold Him who comes from heaven and who must return there. But not before he leaves us all that we need to live our lives through Him, with Him, and in Him. This is our call; this is the cause of our joy.

As we look around this beautiful church, may its beauty and the fragrance of the fresh flowers serve as a visible reminder of the newness of life that has been made possible in our hearts, by means our Savior's resurrection. May the gleam of our floors serve to reflect, not only the light from the sun through the windows, but also may it symbolize the radiance of the grace of God shining in our souls, the souls of his faithful pilgrim people—flawed perhaps by sin and yet radiant as a precious creation of God, every single one of us.

But it cannot end here in this beautiful space— it must lead us outside, into our streets, our workplaces, schools and neighborhoods. We must not remain sitting here—we must go, tell his disciples, tell Peter, tell all that the emptiness of the tomb has brought about the fullness of new life in us. He has been raised; he is not here. Let us go forth to proclaim the Good News.