

Easter Sunday/April 16, 2017

I will sprinkle clean water upon you

Readings: Acts of the Apostles 10:34, 37-43; Colossians 3: 1-4; John 20: 1-9 or Matt 28:1-10

Day after day it was the same reminder...“You need to drink more water...you must drain the bottles ...please empty them before lunch!” This was the incessant mantra I heard last month on my two-week hike to Mount Everest Base Camp in the Himalayan region of Nepal. “Give me a break,” I thought. “I am not a camel- I can’t drink fifty gallons of water in a single sitting!”

We were reminded to drink water again and again, at least three liters in six hours. I quickly learned that purifying and then lugging nearly seven pounds of water is tiresome, yet also knowing I needed the oxygen in my system. Dehydration can sneak up in a moment’s notice in a harsh high-altitude environment. So, I dutifully obeyed, even when I was not thirsty.

Sadly, when it comes to our spiritual life, we are not as swift to recognize the warning signs of spiritual thirst, and do not always have someone readily at hand to remind us. Too often, we search for meaning and satisfaction, sometimes quite aimlessly so in a world utterly incapable of providing the ultimate meaning for which we yearn. The solution may be right in front of us and we miss it.

Today, let us take to heart the words of the angel to the women at the tomb: “Do not be afraid...He is not here, for he has been raised, just as he said.” On this greatest Solemnity of our Faith, we affirm with all our hearts that Jesus Christ has indeed risen, and he has rewarded the spiritual thirst of mankind with the life giving water of salvation. The hallowed darkness and silence of the tomb has given way to the brightness of a beautiful crisp Easter morning. Our Savior has risen from the depths of human pain and suffering and entered into our brokenness so that we might be healed.

The Easter liturgies principally highlight three key symbols: light, water and the long-awaited proclamation of the Easter Alleluia. The Risen One himself is Light, the Light of the world, he who transforms “chaos into cosmos.”

At times, we see only the darkness of a world seemingly no longer in need for a Savior. Just in the past week, ISIS terrorists bombed two Coptic Churches, killing and wounding dozens who were simply attending Palm Sunday Mass in Tanta and Alexandria Egypt. The Coptic Christians are mourning, but are also resilient, and will not allow the chaos to deter them from witnessing their faith.

Despite the challenges, people see through the empty promises offered by the world, discovering that there must in fact be something more, there must be something deeper. Faithful Jews saw the Torah as “the lamp for our steps and light for our path,” “separating light from darkness within creation.” (Ps 19) In Proverbs (6:23), the young are encouraged to keep the teaching of the Law fastened over their hearts, “For the bidding is a lamp, and the teaching a light.”

The symbolism of the Easter Alleluia, deliberately sung three times in a row at the Vigil, represents our attempt to express in words our own transformation in joy. The very first reference in Scripture to singing is in the account from Exodus about the crossing of the Red Sea. The people sang out in song, so grateful for their liberation from slavery: “I will sing to the LORD, for he is gloriously triumphant; horse and chariot he has cast into the sea.”

“Israel has climbed up from the threatening depths of the sea,” through God’s liberating act.¹

¹ Pope Benedict XVI- Easter Vigil 11April 2009)

This day we have risen from the depths of the stormy sea as well. The rain on Good Friday and Holy Saturday seemed most appropriate, leading us to the dawn of new life in Easter.

This day we rejoice because the Lord has done for us exactly what He said He would do. We forget neither the problems of the world, nor the ones in our own lives. Those troubles will not disappear, but they may be seen in a different light.

But we do pause to offer profound thanks to our Lord for his act of humble sacrifice. Our best act of returning thanks will be by our lives of joyous service in His name.

The dual task and privilege now falls to us to carry forth this message of hope and peace into the darkest corners of our world, so that the Light of Truth and Love may illumine all in its wake. Let us delay no longer. There is too much at stake. He has been raised; he is not here. Let us go forth to proclaim the Good News.