

Easter Sunday
April 17, 2022

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

“You need to drink more water...you must drain your bottles ...please empty them before lunch!” This was the incessant mantra I heard on my 2017 two-week trek to Mount Everest Base Camp in the Himalayan region of Nepal. “Give me a break—I am not a camel. I can’t drink 50 gallons of water in a single sitting!” Though not thirsty, I dutifully obeyed.

We were reminded to drink at least three liters in six hours. I quickly learned that purifying and lugging nearly seven pounds of water is tiresome, yet also knowing that one’s body needs to work harder to maintain healthy blood oxygen levels. There is simply not as much oxygen at this high level. Dehydration sneaks up in a moment’s notice.

However, when it comes to our spiritual life, we are not as swift to recognize the warning signs of spiritual thirst. Sadly, we 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, yet we miss it.

We 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.” We affirm with all our hearts that Jesus Christ has indeed risen, and he has rewarded our spiritual thirst with the life-giving water of salvation. The hallowed silence of the tomb has given way to Easter morning.

Our Savior has risen from the depths of human pain and suffering, entering our brokenness so that we might be healed. The Easter liturgy principally highlights three key symbols: light, water and the long-awaited proclamation of the Easter Alleluia. Christ is the Light of the world, he who transforms “chaos into cosmos.” At times, we can see only the darkness of a world seemingly no longer in need for a Savior.

Throughout Lent, we have watched in horror what has transpired in Ukraine. While it is far from over, the international outpouring of support has been most encouraging. At the Easter Vigil, the Holy Father noted that through Christ, “evil has been robbed of its power...and death has become a passage to the stirrings of new life. For with Jesus, the Risen Lord, no night will last forever; and even in the darkest night, in that darkness, the morning star continues to shine.” Even the horrors of war cannot obscure the ultimate triumph of good over evil.

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, 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.” (6:23)

The symbolism of the Easter Alleluia, deliberately sung three times in a row at the Vigil, expresses 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. So grateful for their liberation from slavery, the people sang out in song: “I will sing to the LORD, for he is gloriously triumphant; horse and chariot he has cast into the sea.”

This day we have risen from the depths of the stormy sea as well. The cold, sleet and rain we have experienced lately, while not ideal, still lead us to the dawn of new life in Easter. Soon it will be green! Neither the horrors in Ukraine, nor other problems in the world or challenges in our own lives will disappear, but they may be seen in a different light.

We 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 to carry forth this message of hope and peace into the darkest corners of our world now falls to us, 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.