

Transformation

Patricia Datchuck Sánchez | May. 3, 2014 | Spiritual Reflections

German pastor and social activist Christoph F. Blumhardt once said that it is not enough to celebrate Easter by saying, "Christ is risen." It is useless to proclaim this unless we can also say that we have died with him and that we have also risen with him ("Christ Rising," from *Bread and Wine: Readings for Lent and Easter*, The Plough Publishing House, 2003). Jesus has come from God to live in our midst as one of us. He has endured and conquered the finality of death. He has laid the foundation for a new life and a new world order. In him and because of him, we can be completely transformed in the very depths of our being.



Having said this, the question that remains to be answered is: What does Easter mean to you? The sacred texts for today help us to explore that question by considering how our ancestors in the faith answered it.

Third Sunday of Easter
Acts 2:14, 22-33
Peter, who is featured in Luke's narrative from the Acts of the Apostles, is boldly preaching the kerygma to his fellow Jews in an effort to open their eyes to the truth of Jesus. This is a person who, not too long ago, fell asleep while Jesus needed his support; who denied even knowing Jesus; who went into hiding for fear of the Jews -- and he is transformed into an eloquent proclaimer of all that God has done for sinners in Jesus. Calling himself a witness to the risen Jesus, this transformed Peter is fearless. What can account for this transformation? The climactic moment of the Christ-event: Jesus' death and resurrection.

Scholars tell us that the author of 1 Peter (second reading) was writing to Christians of the Diaspora (1 Peter 1:1) who were suffering or were soon to undergo trial by fire because of their belonging to Jesus. He feared that persistent harassment and persecution might weaken their resolve as well as their faith. To that end, the ancient author reminded his readers that a great price had been paid for their redemption, not in silver or gold, but with the blood of Christ. Redeemed from sin and transformed by grace, believers are to be strong and respond to God's good gift of salvation by living reverent, faith-driven lives.

What did the realization of Easter mean to the two disciples on their way to Emmaus? Luke's answer to this question has resulted in one of the most poignant narratives in all of the Christian Scriptures. As we follow their transformation, we are grateful for Luke's profound insights and grasp of the mystery of God's gift to us in Jesus.

Making their way to Emmaus, Cleopas and his companion were downcast and disappointed. By their own admission, they had hoped Jesus would be Israel's long-awaited redeemer. They could not bring themselves to accept the word of the women who found Jesus' tomb empty. Nor did they place any credence in their vision of angels. Only when Jesus broke open for them the word of God, and only when he broke bread with them, did a light of recognition dawn. In that moment, they remembered, they believed, and they were transformed. Rather than continue their journey, they returned to Jerusalem, no longer hopeless but full of joy, professing their faith in their risen Lord.

This same opportunity for transformation is made available to each of us every time we gather, in Jesus' name, to be nourished by the bread of the Word and by the bread of Eucharist. We come as we are, some sad, some wounded, some broken, some full of vigor, some full of doubts, some with lists of needs and desires, some with empty but open hands. As the word is proclaimed, the Spirit enables us to hear with fresh ears so that we can take away an insight, or renew our resolve to be better. We keep this challenge with us as we go forth into the week ahead. As the bread of life is blessed, broken and shared, the real presence of Jesus makes our hearts burn within us, nourishing us and nudging us toward a more lively faith and more devoted service of those in need.

Although our transformation has begun, it is not complete. It will be necessary for each of us to return again and again to the table of the Lord. There we will find the food to feed all our hungers. There we will also find forgiveness and healing, as well as the motivation to continue the lifelong process of transformation until Jesus comes again.

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