

Alleluia: Easter Joy

Easter Homily at St. Paul Cathedral 2014

*Genesis 1:1-2:2; Genesis 22:1-18; Exodus 14:15-15:1; Isaiah 54:5-14; Isaiah 55:1-11;
Baruch 3:9-15, 32-4:4; Ezekiel 36:16-17a, 18-28; Romans 6:3-11; Luke 24:1-12*

Most Reverend Joseph J. Tyson, Bishop of Yakima

Peace be with you! We sing “Alleluia,” a Hebrew expression of timeless and endless joy! We do so to uplift in our hearts the great uplifting of Jesus – who as God – brings the resurrection of God to each and every one of us.

Yet we also know that when we leave this Vigil we reenter a world still broken and bruised by sins of violence, warfare, poverty and injustice – especially towards immigrants.

How is our sung “Alleluia” a truthful response to the darkness that surrounds us? It was a Jewish German philosopher from the Frankfurter School – Theodor Adorno – who ultimately arrived at the insight that if there is ever to be real justice in the world it must be for all time and all places – current and retroactive – and it was our own Holy Father Pope Benedict XVI who connected this insight from Theodor Adorno on retroactive justice to the Easter resurrection.

Christ is risen! There is justice for the world! And that justice is not just limited to the here and now of a today building for a better tomorrow. It is a justice that retroactively heals the harm of the past because this justice is rooted in a God who IS love!

Because God is love he does not allow any source of pain or suffering to drift into the past unnoticed. But he does not overpower it or conquer it with violence. No. As the all compassionate God, Jesus gets inside the injustice – he rescues it and redeems it. In Jesus, God’s act of forgiveness from the tortuous death of the cross overpowers evil and injustice.

How can we touch this divine love that Jesus – as God – brings to us in his rising from the dead? I think the interpretive key is found in our second reading from St. Paul’s Letter to the Romans: “Are you not aware that we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were indeed buried with him through baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might live in newness of life.” (Romans 6:3-5)

What St. Paul is telling us is that we unite our sufferings to those of Christ. We unite our injustice to the injustice of the cross. We unite our death to the death of Christ. In doing so, we unite ourselves to his rising to new life. In doing so we no longer suffer alone, we no longer live alone and we no longer die alone. This is the core of our sacramental life as a Church.

One word unites us to Christ this night – and that word is “Alleluia.” So when life is hard, when the world seems so hard, and when we become discouraged by our sin, let us resolve to stay close to this one-word Easter prayer: Alleluia – constantly rooting ourselves in our God who is love. Peace be with you!