

April 12, 2020 Bulletin article

A note from Father Phil:

I believe in the Resurrection. I believe that Jesus lives. I can't claim a visitation like Mary Magdalene or a vision like Saint Paul. Even Jesus suggested that such appearances are uncommon. He said to Saint Thomas, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." I am one of those who has not seen and yet believes. My belief in the Resurrection does not depend on the authenticity of the Shroud of Turin. My belief does not depend on the inerrancy of the Bible, as other Christians might claim. Neither, does my belief in the Resurrection rest upon Catholic Church teaching. I believe in the Resurrection because it is consistent with what I have experienced of God.

I have lived long enough to know that God will not assure that everything in my life will be OK—that miraculously there will be no pain, no anxiety, no natural disasters, and no outbreaks like the Covid-19 virus that is killing many vulnerable people here in the United States and around the world. Now, rather than seeing a make-believe world flooded with sunshine and alleluias, I see a world where the sun struggles to come out after a storm, but always manages to reappear. And God is no longer a parent or a friend who keeps me safe and dry; but, rather, the power that enables me to keep going in a stormy, dangerous and uncertain world.

Jesus' life, death and resurrection revealed what has always been true: God is a God of life even in death. Life is cyclical. There is a time to be born and a time to die. A time of sickness and a time of health. A time of laughter and a time of mourning. A time of peace and a time of anxiety. And through it all God is present. Even a quick glance at a crucifix reminds me that God is with me in my pain, in my struggles and in my fear. The man on the cross lives. The crucified Jesus is no stranger. And, yet, the crucifix is not the end of the story. Resurrection is. I have experienced it in the daffodils that emerge in the spring and in the new life that eventually comes from my own heartaches and struggles. Undying love, not death, is God's final word. Life is always being born and reborn.

In an ancient homily delivered on Holy Saturday, an anonymous author envisioned Jesus meeting Adam in hell. The Christ firmly grabs Adam by the wrist and pulls him from that place saying, "I order you, O sleeper to awake. I did not create you to be a prisoner of hell. Rise up, work of my hands, you who were created in my image. Leave this place, for you are in me and I am in you; together we form only one person and we cannot be separated."

Together—the Christ, Adam, you and I—we form only one person. Jesus' resurrection is our resurrection. The Risen Lord grabs not only Adam's wrist, but each of our wrists and yanks us free not from pain, not from anxiety, not from the effects of the coronavirus, but, rather, frees us from the hells that we have created for ourselves. Worlds without an awareness of God. Adam wanted to be like God. Now he is. God desires for each of us nothing less than that: oneness with God. Nothing less than eternal life. Even death could not and cannot separate us from the burning love of God. And neither can this pandemic. Have a wonderful and blessed Easter!