

# Homily for Easter Sunday

April 21, 2019

Readings: Acts 10:34-43; 1 Corinthians 15:19-26; John 20:1-18

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Easter speaks to us of the power of Jesus' resurrection and calls us to remember that the suffering and death of Jesus on the cross was for us. The power of the readings offered for us to reflect on speaks to me of the power of the enduring words of Sacred Scripture and of the shallowness of the fast-paced world and the headlines we're exposed to every day.

Today we might see headlines like these:

*"The body of Jesus, self-proclaimed Messiah crucified in Jerusalem, is missing from the tomb. Did his followers take it?"*

*Or: "Where's the body? Three eye-witnesses claim the tomb where Jesus of Nazareth, a crucified criminal was laid, is empty and the stone was rolled back!"*

Each of these soundbites states a partial truth but neither tells the whole story.

In today's Gospel, Mary Magdalene comes to the tomb early in the morning only to find the stone rolled back and the body of Jesus gone. Her first reaction is to believe that the body of Jesus has been stolen. She runs to tell Peter and the Apostles and says: "They have taken the Lord from the tomb and we don't know where they have laid him." When Peter and "the other disciple" peer into the tomb they see the burial cloths neatly folded and the head cloth in a separate place. They know that something else has taken place.

If we read further on (John 20:10-18, the Gospel for Easter Tuesday) we find a slightly different version in the same chapter. Mary weeps and looking inside the tomb finds two angels sitting where the body was laid. She turns around and sees

a person she believes is the gardener until Jesus says her name, “Mary.” Then she runs to tell the Disciples, “I have seen the Lord.”

In January I was privileged to spend two weeks in El Paso as a volunteer for Annunciation House working in a shelter which welcomed asylum seekers who had been processed and released from detention centers to travel to their sponsors in the United States. Today’s readings seemed especially relevant because we have been subjected to much disinformation about persons arriving at our southern border. Those of us who have been privileged to serve those fleeing violence in their own countries see families, see people like ourselves who want better lives for themselves and their children.

In the reading from the Acts of the Apostles, Peter is challenged to move beyond his belief that salvation is only for the Jews. Through his vision of the cloth laden with foods the Jews did not eat, he is called to visit Cornelius, a Gentile. Peter is told to call no one unclean. Peter is told not to judge, not to presume that faith and baptism are reserved only for the Jews but is also open to the Gentiles.

For us, the question of judgment is also raised. Do we listen only to the headlines? Do we make judgments about others based on their skin color, the language they speak, and the way they are dressed?

Volunteers at our southern border see people! We see families with small children. We see hope written on faces after long journeys. We give simple hospitality: a meal, a bed, clothing where we can, and assistance to connect with the sponsor who will pay their bus or plane fare to their destination.

Mary recognized Jesus when he spoke her name. Do we recognize the stranger among us? Jesus calls each of us by name and each of us is loved and precious in God’s sight!

Our Easter readings also call us to “Clean out the old yeast,” as St. Paul suggests in 1 Corinthians, because “a little yeast leavens the whole dough.”

We can poison our bread with the language of hate or we can choose to salt the dough with new yeast. It's time for us to move beyond the media sound bites on many topics that assault our ears. Let us embrace the Good News! Each of us is loved and each of us is chosen! God calls each person by his or her own name and invites us to witness that Jesus is raised and lives among us!

We see Jesus alive in the witness of good people who extend themselves on behalf of their neighbor every day. Today let each of us witness to the Good News!