

April 21, 2019

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

For those of us who have been in church a while, and I suppose even for those who haven't been in church for a while... we know what today is. It's Easter! Christ is Risen! He is Risen indeed! And we all know, know at least in some way, that the women came to the tomb and they don't find the body and they are told by some mysterious men [angels?] who wonder why they're even there looking for the body of Jesus because he has been raised, you silly people. And everyone is astonished. We're astonished! Jesus Christ is Risen Today! Alleluia!

But there is, as St Luke tells the story, there is just a wee bit more. Actually, there are three scenes and just a moment ago, we read the first. But for Easter to really be Easter, we need to think just a bit deeper. And St Luke helps us in that. After everyone is confused and wondering what on earth [and maybe heaven] is really going on, we meet two of Jesus's disciples on a road to a town we know is Emmaus. It's one of the greatest moments in the whole Bible. Here are these two people on the road, out of town. As you read their story, it's just filled with pathos, this sense of utter despair. These two people have lost everything – they tell us that plainly. All of their hope and all of their plans, all of their lives – everything they had poured themselves into, everything that mattered had died and was, they thought, lying dead in a tomb and now the body isn't even there.

And, as we know from the story, Jesus comes. And they don't recognize him [Grief? Despair? Change of appearance?] And he talks with them. And he heals them. And he feeds them. And finally, finally, we hear the center of the Christian proclamation. 24 chapters and we finally hear it. And those two people, down in a village you can't find any longer, tell us what Easter means. And it's not shock or surprise or even our friend come back to life. They say it for everyone for the last two thousand years. "Did not our hearts burn?" And we have finally arrived at the Easter message. We have finally arrived at the center of the Gospel. We have finally arrived at the meaning of our lives. Did not our hearts burn? If your heart does not burn, you have not yet met the risen Jesus.

I can tell you the exact day I finally understood that. August 24, 2010. I was outside the city of Quevedo, Ecuador. I was there because my parish at the time was doing a water project for some people in the outskirts of this city, people who didn't have

access to clean water. One of our guides knew there was a group of people who wanted to meet us. We were something of the exotic Americans. And they drove us out a bit further to a garbage dump. Really. A garbage dump. And there was a community of people who lived there. The poverty, as you may imagine, is almost indescribable. And we're out there and the people know I'm a pastor/priest and they take me to the church – corrugated tin on four poles. And they want me to pray and celebrate the Eucharist, because a priest doesn't usually come out to them. I try to deflect this – I don't even speak Spanish. And through the translator, a young girl says, "Please Father, Jesus is all we have." In my 47 years, I never heard anyone say that. Jesus is all I have. That's why those women were at the tomb. That's why those disciples on that road that evening were so terribly dejected. That's why standing at Golgotha was so impossible for so many of his disciples. Jesus was all they had. Did not my heart burn?

For everyone who finally experiences Resurrection, who finally encounters the risen Jesus in the places where your grief is greatest, where your hope is the very least, where you are travelling a road and you really don't even know where you are going, Jesus comes and makes our hearts burn. It turns us into revolutionaries

It's not words today. It's our hearts. The very life of Jesus makes our hearts burn. Oh, and there is a third scene to this story. Jesus shows up with all his disciples that night and he opens their minds and he blesses them and he sends them into the world. With their hearts on fire.

Jesus did not stop setting hearts on fire, because he sets our hearts on fire. Let's walk down his road and let him make us alive.

Christ is Risen  
Christ is Risen Indeed!

Amen  
Pastor Erdos

St Luke 24  
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