

A Message from Godfrey

Food plays a major part in the Easter story. First, we have the disciples making their way upstairs to the Upper Room to share what was to be their Last Supper with Jesus where all the disciples were gathered together. Then Cleopas and his companion were joined on the road to Emmaus by a stranger who was able to explain all that had happened in Jerusalem over the past weeks. They had invited him to have supper with them and it was in the breaking of the bread that they realised that the stranger was in fact Jesus. The disciples were talking about this event when he appeared again and sat amongst them.

“they were startled and terrified, and thought they were seeing a ghost”, Luke tells. After showing them his hands and his feet he asked them;

“Have you anything here to eat? They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate it in their presence.”

I mean, after all...broiled fish? Easter time, all that talk about Jesus' glorious resurrection, and we're talking a little halibut. This actually brings it back down to earth. Close your eyes for a moment.

Can you smell the rich salty aroma of the fish? Maybe a little rice, some pita bread, a cup of wine...Jesus fed the 5000 with some bread and some fish and now here he is, asking for a bit of what he offered back in the early days of his ministry.

And that's the whole point of this gospel passage. Jesus wants to bring it back down to earth, to prove that he is back down to earth. And how does he do it? With some broiled fish cooked very simply. There was no thought about the fish being cooked so that it fell apart at the touch of a fork. No concern about the skin being crisp- this was not a smoked salmon moment or sardines cooking on an open fire on the beach at San Sebastian! It was basic, down to earth broiled fish!

Luke tells us that the apostles already knew that Jesus had risen from the dead – they were talking about it among themselves when Jesus showed up – but even though they knew that Jesus had risen, when he showed up, they were frightened. They didn't fully understand that he was real so he invited them to touch him, to see that he was real, to see his hands and his feet (because in that culture, ghosts were not supposed to have hands or feet). Shades of Thomas from last week's Gospel all over again. Before he addressed their fear and confusion, reminding them of the prophecies fulfilled in him, before he opened their minds to the scriptures, before he called on them to act as witnesses to the repentance and forgiveness of sins that his passion and death brought...before he did any of these things, he let them touch him, and he sat down and ate with them. Food is so important in the Easter story.

Flesh and bones, hands and feet, and broiled fish are the things of creation, the natural order. Mary, a woman created by God, gave Jesus his flesh and bones and his hands and feet. She also gave him the stomach that would eat the fish God created. The very same flesh and bones, the very same hands and feet, appeared to Cleopas and his companion on the road to Emmaus and then "vanished from their sight" (Luke 24:31), and now show up unannounced and unexpected in the midst of their conversation with others. In last week's gospel Jesus' hands and feet, his flesh and bones, passed through walls and locked doors.

The resurrected life of Christ, it seems, is revealed in and through the created order. The degree to which we have allowed ourselves to be bound by the created order is the degree to which we are unable to see resurrected life and holiness in this world. We bind ourselves through our fears, our sorrows and losses, our runaway thoughts and distractions, our attachments and addictions to things, people, and even beliefs and whims. Sometimes it's our unwillingness to allow or trust God to grow and change us, in binding ourselves to the created order we lose recognition of and the ability to live in the sacred. That's the very opposite of resurrected life.

The resurrected life of Christ reveals that all creation and every one of us are filled with God. Nothing can bind or supersede the grace that is given us through resurrection, that unconditional love, unconditional forgiveness, unconditional life. That is, I think, one of the most difficult things for us to see, believe, and live by. It is, however, the divine reality into which we are invited, not at some future time and place but here and now.

Christ our God longs and desires to open our minds to understand the scriptures, to understand all that has been written, spoken, and revealed about him in whatever form that happens and has happened. That's what Jesus did for the disciples and it's what he does for us. This is not an academic or intellectual understanding. That the disciples are witnesses does not mean they now have all the answers. It means they now have the life Jesus wants to give them. They are witnesses based not on what they know, but on who they are, how they live, and their relationship with the risen Christ.

In a few minutes, we will share God's peace with one another. We may not be 100% comfortable about it but we do it to remind us that we are a church together and not just a group of disparate individuals and a few minutes after that, we will share in the bread and wine. We will commune with each other and with God in the sacrament of his body and blood. Real bread, real wine, real presence. The heavenly banquet, if you like where earth and heaven come together. As you gaze at the piece of bread I will place in the palm of your hand I hope you will be reminded of the real presence, not as a piece of sacramental theology, but more as your close relationship with Christ, which is sustained by regularly receiving Holy Communion because we are remembering the words of Jesus; "Do this in remembrance of me."

We are not at a memorial service – we are at a celebration of what Easter and new life is all about. This Risen Lord is a full-body experience. We cannot try to limit our relationship with God to a mere intellectual exercise and that is why, as we end this Eucharistic meal together today, we are sent out with the dismissal having received the gift of spiritual nourishment at his meal, as his chosen guests because we have chosen him, we can then face the world, to witness to the living Christ just as Jesus told us to in the Gospel. We do that with our voices when we share the word, with our hands when we help others, with our feet when we walk to help others....

May we rejoice in that, as we approach his altar, as we accept his invitation to share in the eternal meal.

Thoughts and prayers

Godfrey

