

Signs of Resurrection

April 11, 2021

When we look, Resurrection is everywhere, all around us, every day. As Father Richard Rohr, whose anti-racism work we are studying in Adult Education at 9 a.m., puts it:

“It is surely no liturgical accident that the celebration of the Resurrection goes on for a full 50 days and then expands into Pentecost, which takes up the whole rest of the church year. What was first just a daring truth in the body of Jesus is made universal truth by the descent and indwelling of the Holy Spirit upon all the races — unexpectedly and uninvited. It seems to me this is trying to name the ubiquity, universality, gratuity and timelessness of the Easter message. It takes a long time to recognize and absorb that which is already and everywhere. As we all know, we take the familiar for granted. In fact, we hardly see it.”

In my brief words today, I want to help us to SEE the Resurrection all around us, as Thomas eventually did. John’s gospel is a gospel of signs—most of which, the author admits, are not written down at all. So today, we will study the signs of Resurrection.

Rohr is a very good guide. He writes, again:

“The mystery of Resurrection is first of all the constant and universal pattern, which is then made dramatic, daring and trustful in the personal body of Jesus! Science is now helping us to think this way. I am told, for example, that there are the same number of atoms in the universe that there were five seconds after the Big Bang happened approximately 13.8 billion years ago. They just keep playing musical chairs and by all evidence — at ever higher levels of complexity and consciousness.

“It is not poetry to say that we were all once stardust, and what we are yet to be — is the good surprise, gift and pure grace of God.”

It is that kind of Resurrection—the good surprise and gift of grace, the kind that helps us to realize that we are all gleaming and sparkling stardust, as was Jesus—that I want to highlight for us today.

The weekend before last, my vaccinated family gathered to celebrate the 10th birthday of our grandson, Jaxon—who once joined me at Union in our Christmas Pageant. You may remember him. Really good looking kid. Gets his looks from his dad. Anyway, eleven of us gathered around our dining room table, for the first time in over a year. We had crepe paper streamers from corner to corner, and helium balloons and bright paper wrapping Jaxon’s gifts (and a couple for his younger brother, Kyle). Resurrection? Damn right. No doubt. Yes, indeed.

Or, you may have noticed the beautiful flowers that adorned the chapel altar where Pastor Bridget preached last Sunday, or the peace lily I had on my little communion table (and that is there again this week). Consider the lilies. Resurrection? Damn right. No doubt. Yes, indeed.

Or, on my morning walk with Theo, I see the signs of the buds on the trees—life waiting to spring forth, pregnant with the possibility of millions of blooms, the forest floor turning yellow-green, soon to blaze forth with ferns and fungi and flowers. I touch the buds as I walk past,

feeling the new life surging through the sap. Resurrection? Damn right. No doubt. Yes, indeed.

As Rohr puts it, again:

“Easter no longer seems like a huge act of faith in a onetime miracle that no one can prove. It is right always-already-now, breaking through all kinds of suffering, tragedy and pain. I have seen it in my lifetime, and the lifetimes of my family and friends in a thousand forms. Admittedly, often shrouded by grief and sadness, and that is why we need an exemplar to lead us and help us across ‘the tragic gap’ that human existence always is.

“Nothing is the same forever, says modern science. Ninety-eight percent of our bodies' atoms are replaced every year. Geologists with good evidence over millennia can prove that no landscape is permanent. Water, fog, steam and ice are all the same thing, but at different stages and temperatures. The preface to the Catholic funeral liturgy says, ‘Life is not ended, it is merely changed.’ Science is now giving us a very helpful language for what religion rightly intuited and imaged.”

The warfare between religion and science is over, says the Resurrection. Or, as the Muslim scholar Fethullah Gulen puts it, we must “fly with two wings.” Religion without science is superstition; science without religion is reductive. Science and religion without each other are destructive. Together, science and religion (and not only Christianity!) point to signs of Resurrection everywhere, every day, every way. Fly with two wings. Resurrection? Damn right. No doubt. Yes indeed.

And I think of the families recovering from loss due to recent death, whether from COVID-19 or other causes. Grief is tinged with longing and pining and yet life-ongoing, in new generations, in children and grandchildren and great-grandchildren, in remembering a sibling or son or daughter or father or mother. Is memory a sign of Resurrection? Damn right. No doubt. Yes, indeed.

Or, I think of ALL the ways people work together for justice and peace around our world, across centuries. I continue to be so proud of and hopeful for this congregation. There are so many patient but sure ways that we work together for a better world here at Union. There are signs of this all around us, all over the world.

This past week I spoke at an interfaith event sponsored by a think tank in Norway. Did you know that the Norwegian government has a federally-funded program to promote interreligious understanding? Emerging out of the wake of the 2011 right-wing terrorist shootings at a summer camp, leaders of churches and mosques realized the need to have dedicated time, with resources behind them, to gain and grow understanding. Out of death, new life, greater justice, and growing peace. Resurrection? Damn right. No doubt. Yes, indeed.

And we see a clear sign of the Resurrection in anti-racism work. Out of the death of George Floyd, and the deaths of so many others—including Delana Ashley Yaun and six other Asian women in Atlanta, and six million and more brought to these shores during slavery, or the millions killed by viruses during the “settling” (conquest) of the Americas—out of those deaths and the drum-beat of awareness has come a renewed commitment to END the tragic and unnecessary scourge of racism in American culture, and to work toward the hope of a truly

multicultural America with respect for the dignity of difference, and liberty and justice for all. Resurrection? Damn right. No doubt. Yes, indeed.

My departure from this call to ministry among you, in a few weeks, about which I will say more when I preach on May 23rd, will not end any of these good things going on around, among, within you. The Resurrection is NEVER only about one person. The Resurrection is for all of us, together. Rohr one more time:

“A trust in the physical resurrection of Jesus frees believers, if we let it, from the stripped-down belief in a Christ who came merely to ‘save souls for heaven’ instead of liberating and healing bodies in this world. If matter is inhabited by God, then matter is somehow eternal and when the Creed says we ‘believe in the resurrection of the body,’ it means our bodies too and not just Jesus’ body! As in him, so also in all of us. As in all of us, so also in him...”

“The Christian narrative is saying that reality’s true story from the very beginning has always been Incarnation, that God’s hiding place and place of epiphany is the physical world. Resurrection is, therefore, not a one-time anomaly in the body of Jesus, rather the Jesus pattern is revealing the pattern of everything that God has created.

“Easter is not one day, but Easter is apparently every day and everywhere.”

And because we have this promise, and these signs, of Resurrection it means that (to quote from Rohr’s webpage, borrowing from the Diversity Welcome of Training for Change:

You Belong: We would like to let you know that you belong. . . .

People on all parts of the continuum of gender identity and expression, including those who are gay, bisexual, heterosexual, transgender, cisgender, queer folks, the sexually active, the celibate, and everyone for whom those labels don’t apply. We say, “You belong.”

People of African descent, of Asian descent, of European descent, of First Nations descent in this land and abroad, and people of mixed and multiple descents and of all the languages spoken here. We say, “You belong.”

Bodies with all abilities and challenges. Those living with any chronic medical condition, visible or invisible, mental or physical. We say, “You belong.”

People who identify as activists and those who don’t. Mystics, believers, seekers of all kinds. People of all ages. Those who support you to be here. We say, “You belong.”

Your emotions: joy, fear, grief, contentment, disappointment, surprise, and all else that flows through you. We say, “You belong.”

Your families, genetic and otherwise. Those dear to us who have died. Our ancestors and the future ones. The ancestors who lived in this land, in this place, where these buildings are now . . . we honor you through this work that we are undertaking. We say, “You belong.”

People who feel broken, lost, struggling; who suffer from self-doubt and self-judgment.
We say, “You belong.”

All beings that inhabit this earth, human or otherwise: the two-legged, the four-legged,
winged and finned, those that walk, fly, and crawl, above the ground and below, in air
and water. We say, “You belong.”

Do you now see these signs of Resurrection, Easter, all around us?

I’ll let you answer that question in any way you see fit, but I say: Damn right. No doubt. Yes,
indeed. Happy Easter! Amen.

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