

Saint Thomas' and Saint Thomas' of the Air Church

Easter I

April 24, 2022

rmcneely+

As my Father has sent me

Even so send I you

It is still the Day of the Resurrection but near nightfall:

The arrest in the garden of Gethsemane

Is over

The Jewish trials

Are over

The Roman trial

Is over

The brutal scourging, and march to Calvary

Are over

Nailing Him to the cross

Is over

The agony and torture of the cross

Is over

The bleeding wounds of his hands, feet and side

Is over

The retrieval of His body from the cross by Joseph of Arimathea  
and Nicodemus

Is over

The burial of His body in the tomb

Is over

The women's search for His body

Is over

The resurrected Jesus has revealed Himself to Mary, to two  
disciples walking to Emmaus, to many of the Apostles.

The word of His Resurrection has spread like wildfire throughout  
Jerusalem

    and from there throughout the world  
    as devout Jews returned to their homes after Passover.  
All that Jesus had gone through to complete his mission on Earth  
    Has been completed

He is resurrected

    mankind has been redeemed from the evil one  
    death itself has been defeated  
    and the way to eternal life is opened.

Easter has been instituted and the very foundation of Christianity  
and the Apostolic Church has been secured.

10 of the Apostles are gathered in a locked room (Thomas didn't  
get the memo apparently):

    They were Fearful of the Jews  
    Would they be next to the cross?  
    How would Jesus' word be spread if they were all killed?

John picks up the story of that Easter evening:

    Without warning  
    Without the locked door disturbed  
    Without fanfare  
    suddenly  
    Jesus is standing among them.

They have reason to be afraid

    Very much afraid  
All but John dissented Him from the moment of His arrest  
    Even Peter denounced Him

His first word to the Apostles was “Peace be unto you”

Do you hear the echo of the liturgy?

Listen for it just before the administration of the Body  
and Blood in a few moments

Can we imagine the relief?

And then Jesus does something that none of them could expect.

He breathed the Holy Spirit into them

And ordained them Priests of His Church.

Before the Church could begin, it needed Priests

And the first priests were formed that evening

He charged them;

As my Father has sent me

So send I you.

He instilled the Holy Ghost in them in the same manner that God  
brought life to the first man; Adam

He breathed it into them.

They being fortified with the Holy Ghost,

Jesus gave them the power to be His representatives on Earth

To, with His authority, absolve our sins.

These first Christian priests,

Just as the current Christian Priests

Were charged with the power to absolve sin

Through Jesus, the Christ.

The Old Testament system of sacrifice was over.

Jesus had shed His blood and given his life as the sacrifice  
the sins of mankind were redeemed.

Our ordination or the ordering of Priests to this day

Repeats Jesus words

The bishop declares: whatsoever sins you remit, they are  
remitted and whosoever sins you retain, they are retained.

We reserve the story for the celebration of our own St Thomas  
 on December 21<sup>st</sup>  
 but let's go there now  
 in the very next verses of St John's Gospel  
 Again John gives us his first hand account.

It is 8 days later.

Again in the locked room.  
 This time all 11 apostles are there huddling in the evening  
 hour.  
 Still fearful of what the Temple officials and the mob may do.  
 Thomas has heard of the rumors that Jesus is alive and resurrected  
 He cannot understand how this could be  
 He is skeptical  
 Says he will believe it when he can touch the nail wounds  
     Put his hand into Jesus' side where the lance was thrust  
 Thomas perhaps speaking of many  
     Has said "I will believe it when I see it for myself"  
     And earns his name of Doubting Thomas.  
     He questions this unbelievable event

Again without warning or fanfare  
     Jesus mysteriously appears,  
     Materializes in the room.

Thomas approaches  
 Jesus offers him his 5 crucifixion wounds.

Thomas does an interesting thing  
     Without doing as he said  
     Without placing his finger in the nail wounds  
     And without thrusting his hand into the lance wound in Jesus  
 side

Thomas falls before Jesus

And says: My Lord, My God.  
 An act repeated by many today  
 at the elevation of the host  
 and chalice during the consecration of the Holy Communion.

Thomas kneels  
 And his faith overcomes him.

Doubting Thomas  
 Doubts no more.

And there begins what some theologians of today call  
 The Easter Effect

This rag tag group of Apostles and those who devoted themselves  
 to Jesus during His 3 year earthly ministry  
 Spread the word of His Story  
 Told of the miracles  
 Told of the crucifixion  
 The Resurrection

And soon after the ascension, they wrote it down  
 A remarkable and deliberate recording  
 that we know  
 As the New Testament,  
 First Mark, Matthew and Luke  
 Later John  
 explained  
 What happened was at once inexplicable  
 But nonetheless certainly true.

It took time for the early Christians to understand what it all meant  
 What Jesus' life and ministry  
 meant for their own lives.

Over time the Easter Effect took hold:

Even the way they thought about time  
 Changed

For thousands of years the Sabbath day was the last day of the  
 week; from sundown Friday night until sundown Saturday

Christians reoriented time itself.

The Resurrection occurred on Sunday,  
 the first day of the week.

The Sabbath became the first day of the week  
 and they gave that day to God  
 and they re-told the Resurrection story every Sunday.

As do we today in every Sunday Communion service  
 Eventually time itself would change to conform to the Easter  
 Effect

The counting of years would begin again  
 Anno Domine, the year of the Lord  
 Would begin in the year of his incarnation  
 The years before Christ would be BC  
 And count down as they approached His birth.

The Jews had long anticipated the cataclysmic  
 world redeeming event  
 that God had promised:  
 the coming of the messiah

The Easter effect led the Christians to know  
 that the cataclysmic event had taken place  
 with the life of Christ.  
 History itself had been rewritten  
 and the prophecies were fulfilled.  
 The cataclysmic event was not coming at the end of time  
 It had come within time.

They had been saved by the life,

death  
and resurrection of Jesus.  
The world-redeeming event was not coming at the end of time,  
it had already come at EASTER.

The Easter Effect changed the way they led their lives.  
They lived the love that Jesus had taught them  
They no longer feared death in the same way  
They knew that for those living a Christian life  
Death was not the final word  
Of human history

Life took on a new meaning.  
And there was such joy.

After a time the early Christians slowly came to believe  
that what had happened to Jesus  
was not just about Him  
It was also about each of them.  
His destiny was also their destiny  
His mission was their mission

Jesus was resurrected and transformed to a new kind of life.  
They saw it for the 40 days after the Resurrection

They gradually came to know  
That like Jesus,  
They had been transformed as well  
They had been given a new life in Christ.

Armed with the knowledge of their own resurrected life in the next world

Early Christians accepted the opposition,  
scorn and even death  
As a consequence of spreading the Story  
They confidently spoke out  
They took the punishment  
And some even a martyred death  
As the price willingly paid to deliver the Gospel.

And they spoke of the doctrines of what would later be called Christianity

And the doctrine was different  
from anything anyone of the time knew.

The Easter Effect took hold

And in a few centuries  
Those 12 rag tag, inconsequential, unlikely  
Men of God  
Had reached every continent on Earth.

Here in this little miracle church of St Thomas  
Is the Easter Effect alive and well within us?

We have come through by what some measure  
was a tough Lenten Season  
and a tough life of hiding from a virus.  
But it is over now.  
We got through it.

All of us were involved

Several of us were there at each step  
Each day of Holy Week  
Each step of Jesus, the Christ  
From Palm Sunday  
To crucifixion  
To Resurrection  
To Easter

And we of Saint Thomas Church  
San Francisco, CA  
Are we impelled by the Easter Effect?  
Will we live that transformed life?

Jesus said to each of us  
As He said to the Apostles in that closed upper room:

*As my Father has sent me  
Even so  
So send I*

*You.*

What will be our answer?

