

Happy Easter, my brothers and sisters. Before I begin my homily I want to thank Fr. John for sharing his Easter pulpit with me. I am very honored to stand before you on this most glorious morning. And now that I am here, what do I say? This Easter preaching comes with high expectations. I think I will start with your words.

The Lord is Risen Indeed! Alleluia! These are your words of faith and hope...your response...to God's presence in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. When you say these words, you become a light for others. When you say these words you give hope to others that new life awaits them always. No longer are we stuck in the sins of our past. No longer are we stuck in the grave at death. Through death on a cross, Jesus Christ gives us eternal life....that new life starts now and is available to us every moment.

For some it started last evening....at our Easter Vigil. We baptized 5 babies, confirmed 20 youth, confirmed and received 5 adults. Like Mary Magdalene, we arrived while it was still dark. We read the whole story of salvation beginning with Genesis and as we approached the Resurrection story of Mark, candles were lit, the bells rang out, and we sang Alleluia. It was glorious!

It's was also long....the service lasts around 2 hours....you can imagine the reaction when at the rehearsal yesterday we informed the youth and the parents of young babies of the length. People who are confirmed and received, and

older children and adults who are baptized at the vigil definitely know something has happened to them. To add a little humor Fr. Skutch proclaimed, “Aww...what’s a couple of hours in the whole sweeping history of salvation!”

Then as we read of creation, the flood, the Exodus, Isaiah’s words of salvation, and the Valley of Dry bones, we remembered the agony and pain of human suffering through time. It reminded us of all the pain and suffering that continues now...today...in our families, in our communities. Three days ago we collectively remembered the suffering and shame of Jesus Christ’s crucifixion. But the story did not end there...The Christian story never ends in death and destruction.

Little did Mary, Peter, and the other disciple understand when they approached the empty tomb on that first Easter morning. They did not know what to believe. Sometimes we’re not so sure either. But then, in the garden, with sunrise upon them, Mary heard Jesus call her name and she knew....she didn’t understand it....but she knew....her Lord and Savior were with her.

It started to come together for her then...she remembered Jesus had said something about being the Good Shepherd...and that his sheep would know his voice and would follow him. Sure enough, Mary, knew his voice. And then she knew and she wanted to hold on to him and never let him go. But he wasn’t ready for that. He had yet to ascend into heaven before he was ready for anyone to hold him...to cling to him. There is a lot of speculation

about what this means...what I believe is that he was still in transition from history (time and space) back into eternity. That had to be completed before he was ready to draw us all unto himself. But now in our time and place his transition and glorification have long been completed. And Jesus calls each one of us by name as well.

Before I went to seminary...I encountered many people and at least one priest who did not believe in the Resurrection. Most of the time I did not argue. Since I still had a good many questions about it myself, my best defense in favor of the Resurrection was the Creed. Usually I would hear in return, "That's where the trouble began either with the Creeds or with those men who wrote them." Since I had met so many unbelieving Christians....people who tried to follow the Ten Commandments and the Great Commandment and who went to church every Sunday, but couldn't quite come to believe in the Resurrection, I thought maybe in classes I was going to learn a really good secret about how to believe in the Resurrection without really believing in the Resurrection. Do you know what I mean? I was even starting to think that it was more sophisticated to embrace Christianity without believing the Resurrection...only the uneducated religious really believed that a dead man could be raised up.

Then one day, God called my name. A brilliant professor...a highly educated kind of man....a student of science....a student of literature....someone who has written many books himself....stood up and said with love and fervor that I will never forget.... "We don't really

know what happened that first Easter Morning. We don't really know how it happened. What we do know is that whatever happened, has sustained a community of believers for over 2000 years and that is good enough for me."

God spoke to me in that moment and said Mary, you too can believe. You don't need to know exactly what happened...you don't need to know how it happened. Just believe and then see with eyes of faith see how God is at work in the world around you. See that the Lord is risen!

My brothers and sisters in Christ, there is no secret knowledge. Just wonderful, mysterious, and beautiful faith. Believe and see with the eyes and heart of Jesus. Be nourished by the body and blood of Jesus. Feel the new life within you. Watch. See the transforming work of God at work in the world around you and know beyond a shadow of a doubt, Alleluia! The Lord is Risen!

The Lord is Risen indeed! Alleluia!