

What is different this week?

2 Easter, Year C – April 18, 2004 – Rev. Dr. Patrick R. Close

What is different this week? Well, the sun is shining and it finally got warm ... Alleluia! The Phillies and the Flyers both won! Miracle of miracles! Look around you ... do you notice the difference? The people are gone! Last week, we celebrated Easter. It was glorious! The music was great! The flowers were beautiful! The services, many, were wonderful! We were packed beyond capacity!

I am always happy to see so many people at Easter. But I wonder what happens the next week. Today is called "Low Sunday" in the Church. Maybe it's the nice weather. Maybe lots of people are on spring break this week. I just don't get it. Has the message changed? No! We are still in Eastertide. What gives? I had a little old lady, a parishioner, ask me last week ... "Where are all the people the rest of the time?" I just don't know.

Maybe it has something to do with what we hear in the Gospel today. Doubt seems to creep in so quickly into our lives. We get busy. Somehow the message of Easter fades so quickly in the face of day-to-day life. Why is our faith so limited? Don't we need God? Don't we understand that the miracle of the Resurrection is celebrated every Sunday, every day in Church?

Thomas was not with the disciples when Jesus first appeared to them. He doubted. He wasn't part of that experience so he just couldn't believe. When Jesus does appear, he boldly confesses Jesus as Lord! Is that what it takes for us, a visible sign every time we doubt?

Maybe some of the other things that the Gospel reports today are troubling to people. Jesus says, "Peace be to you." Jesus brings peace, and expects us to be people of peace. Maybe that is too much to expect of us. Maybe we aren't willing to make the changes necessary to be people of peace.

The more frightening phrase from Jesus is, "So I send you..." Ah ha! That's what is frightening others off today! Jesus has lived, and died, and been raised from the dead. In a few weeks we will celebrate his Ascension, when he goes to be with God. Jesus is no longer here ... we are on our own. No we have to pick up and do what Jesus has done. We have to proclaim our faith, confront injustice, deal with the sick and poor. No wonder people shy away today. It means we have to do something!

Easter is about the Risen Lord. In the next few weeks we will hear the stories of how Jesus appeared to the disciples and followers. He was getting them ready for Pentecost. He was preparing them to become the church, not a bunch of pew sitters but a community of faith and action.

Now we are to become the messengers. God sent us Jesus ... now Jesus sends us. It will be through us that Jesus reaches out and touches the world. It will be our hands who help lift up the poor. It will be our mouths that teach and proclaim God's word. It will be our feet that carry us out into the ministry of reconciliation.

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We have been given the gift of new life. Jesus' Resurrection is the sign of God's love and our hope for the future. Now, we have to do something with it. It is time for us to stand up ... to act and to speak. Maybe that is why fewer people are here. It takes a dedicated group of people to be day-to-day Christians. It is up to us to be the way Jesus transforms the world.

We are the ones. We have Jesus. We have peace. Now we are sent. What difference will we make in the world?