

EASTER VIGIL 2021 ST. VINCENT'S, COBLESKILL

♪ *Resucito, resucito, resucito, aleluya* ♪

La muerte, donde esta la muerte? Donde esta mi muerte? Donde su Victoria?

[death, where is death? Where is my death? Where is its victory? He is risen!]

The Gospel we just heard is the end of the story of the Passion according to Mark which we heard on Palm Sunday. It is the last act of the drama of Holy Week. We have traveled from Palm Sunday through the Last Supper & the execution of Jesus on Good Friday to Mark's telling of this Easter story tonight.

On Palm Sunday we heard the last words of Jesus recorded in Mark, just before he breathes his last breath, "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?" But the Aramaic words "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachtani" can also be translated, "My God, my God, this was my destiny!" Jesus has fulfilled the will of God, his destiny, by surrendering his spirit to Abba, his Father. The same words are in Matthew's Gospel. This fits the meaning of his last words in John's Passion, "It is finished" & Luke's, "Into your hands I commend my spirit."

Tonight we celebrate the rest of the story. We are finishing the 3 day liturgy which began on Holy Thursday evening & covers 51 hours [with pauses to sleep & eat]. We hear once more the story of the Resurrection of Jesus from the dead, the event I just sang about. Sometimes we may be as bewildered & frightened as the women who first entered the empty tomb, but the stone of our fear and cynicism has been rolled back by our choice to show up to receive the grace of God, the way the first disciples showed up, ready to begin again to trust in the Good News Jesus proclaimed & lived. Our world desperately needs the stone of fear and the boulder of falsehood to be rolled back in our time.

But, in our day & in our culture, Holy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday are like any other days in the week for many people. Stores, banks, & the Post Office are open. People often say "Happy Easter" before going through Holy Thursday & Good Friday.

But for those who observe the Triduum, the 3 days [Holy Thursday, Good Friday and the Easter Vigil], it is clear that we can't get to Easter without going through the whole week - Palm Sunday, Holy Thursday, and, especially, Good Friday. So often, we want to go straight to Easter - to life - to feasting without working through the pain of living, of loving, of washing feet and grieving loss. These 3 days describe the whole Paschal Mystery, the life, death and rising of Jesus - through which he sends us his Spirit.

I read a story that describes the joy of this day as well as the path we walk to get here.

It's A reflection on a passage from John's Gospel, "Jesus said, *Unless the grain of wheat falls to the earth and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat. But if it dies, it produces much fruit.*"

This is how it goes:

How does a grain of wheat feel as it is planted in the soil?

To answer that, I imagine interviewing a stalk of wheat, for every stalk was once a grain. Here is what the stalk might say ...



Day lilies sprouting in April next to Peter's house

"I liked being a grain of wheat. I was proud of who I was: Golden. Smooth. Perfectly intact. But then some farmer dug a hole and tossed me into it. 'What's going on?' I asked. But my question was met with silence. Then the dirt came pouring down upon me. I protested, 'Hey! You're burying me alive! Stop!' But no one heard me.

"I sat in total darkness. Afraid. Then I felt something. Moisture. At first I thought, 'Good. I won't die of thirst.' But soon I began to get soggy. I sensed that my golden color was fading. My smooth exterior became wrinkly. My intactness was breached as I was spit asunder. I whimpered, 'I'm dying ... This is the end of me.'---- Then something *amazing* happened.

Out of my shriveled, broken, dying self, **two** shoots emerged. One began pushing upward, the other downward – both powered by a force within and beyond me.

As my root went down, my shoot went up until it broke through the soil and into the brightness of the sun.

I was no longer a grain of wheat – but something better: a *stalk* of wheat.

From me would come forth many, many grains of wheat that would help feed the people of the world."

In closing, the stalk said: "Trust the Farmer ... Befriend the silence and darkness ...

Embrace transformation ... Willingly relinquish your intactness ... Believe... For the ending is really the Beginning. [adapted from a story by Sr. Melanie Swoboda]



Forsythia in Peter's back yard

That story is a reflection on the Paschal Mystery of Christ. We are living our personal paschal mystery whenever we renew our Baptismal promises, as we do as part of every Easter Vigil. We are going through the process described in the letter to the Romans.

After I bless the Easter Water, we will renew our baptismal vows by answering some questions. Our response is not complete until we begin to live what we say in words. You have already begun to live those words by coming here today, but we are all challenged to carry that life out from here to our families, to our schools, to the places where we work and to the world.

First I will ask, Do you reject Satan & sin & evil so we can live as children of God? We will respond "I DO." You might think, "Of course I reject Satan!" But do I really believe there is a force that pulls me away from God? If so, how does that operate in MY life? Do I let fear rule my life? Or resentment? Or anger? Or unconscious judgment of someone who is different?

Then I will ask, "Do you believe in God the Father, creator of heaven & earth?" And our response is I DO. Remember, when we say we believe those words we are saying that God created only **one** race, the human race, that we are all brothers and sisters, members of one family & that we are stewards of the earth, our common home.

I will ask, "Do you believe in Jesus Christ," and our response is, I DO. In that response, we are saying that we cannot save ourselves but we believe he has won victory over death *without resorting to violence*, we are saying that we believe that there is no Good Friday without Easter Sunday; [as well as the opposite, there is no Easter without Good Friday], we are saying that we will commit ourselves to follow the way of the Prince of peace, and that we accept him as our only judge.

Finally, I will ask, "Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting?"

And once more our response is, I DO. When we say I do, we are affirming the same creed as our brothers & sisters in other Christian churches pray

[that's why the word "catholic" is not capitalized. It does not mean Roman Catholic, it literally means universal that is, all Christians]

We are saying that we, like the saints before us, trust in the power of God's Spirit to forgive our sins and to heal our divisions on earth and even to bridge the gap between us and those who have died, making us a true *communion* of saints. When we live our Baptism, we become evidence of the Resurrection of Jesus.

Will you sing your faith with me? 🎵Resucito, resucito, resucito, aleluya 🎵



Sunrise on Easter Morning, 2021 in Middleburgh NY at an Ecumenical Sunrise Service

Links to the Easter Vigil at St. Vincent's in Cobleskill, NY. Presider: Friar Peter Deacon: Gary Surman

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qw_AqmjKJHE Easter Vigil 2021, Exsultet

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YSFuCR9DgEE> Easter Vigil 1a Gloria, Reading from Romans, Easter Alleluia & Psalm 118

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=majoRISlbe8> Easter Vigil 2 - Psalm, Gospel, Homily, blessing of Easter water, renewal of Baptismal Promises & Prayer of the Faithful

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JnWEShJ_UFs Easter Vigil 3 – Eucharistic Prayer to end of Mass

Links to Ecumenical Sunrise Service at Coltrain Funeral home parking lot, April 4, 2021, Middleburgh NY

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yH78Awp382s> Sunrise with birdsong,

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Le3hQJ8Rxxs> Reflection by Carolyn 04/04/2021

Liturgy of the Word at St. Vincent's, Cobleskill. April 3, 2021

Readings from the Hebrew Scriptures

Genesis 1:1-2:2 The story of Creation

Response: And God saw that it was good.

Exodus 14:15-15:1 The story of the redemption of the Israelites

Response: People of Israel, listen; people of Israel, pay attention.

People of Israel, dance. People of Israel, shout for joy!

Isaiah 54:5-14 With enduring love I take pity on you

Response: I will praise you, Lord, for you have rescued me.

Baruch 3:9-15, 32-4:4 Walk by the light of the Lord.

Response: Lord, you have the words of everlasting life.

Epistle & Gospel

Romans 6:3-11 We were buried with Christ, and rise with him from the dead

Response: Alleluia, alleluia, let us rejoice and be glad!

Mark 16:1-7 He has been raised and goes before you to Galilee.