

## *From the Rector's Study ~*

"What does Christ's resurrection mean to me?" It is the question that all Christians have answered for themselves in some fashion. And once, answered, it is a question worth to which it is worth returning as they continue to follow Christ. It is the question that the community of Christians, the Church, must help people to answer who are considering the Christian way for themselves.

Author Anthony J. Kelly in his recent book *The Resurrection Effect* suggests some ways that Christ's resurrection has meaning in people's lives. Kelly contrasts the disciples' experience of Jesus' transfiguration ((Matthew 17:1-9, Mark 9:2-8, Luke 9:28-36) with how they experience Jesus risen. He points out that, though Jesus' appearance is radically changed atop the mountain, nevertheless there's no sense given in the gospels other than that the disciples recognize Jesus throughout the event. Christ's resurrection, however, finds the disciples struggling to believe that he is not a ghost, or that he is not a gardener who has moved Jesus' body from the grave. The meaning of Christ's resurrection, then, is that God acts beyond the limits "of past expectation or of present comprehension." "As a result," Kelly suggests, the resurrection "dismantles previous horizons and categories, and introduces the radically new in which the past is interpreted and the possibilities of the future are re-defined." For a person or for a people, the meaning of the resurrection of Jesus is that our perception does not determine how things really are. With God, it is profoundly true that all things are possible.

Kelly notes also that the resurrection of Jesus is "divinely gratuitous." God's grace is not restricted by any "human economy of merit or laws of exchange." Kelly points out that after he has been raised, Jesus "comes and goes and gives himself, always as a sign of contradiction to the world that has condemned him. The resurrection of Jesus represents "an excess" of God's generosity that "holds faith on edge, preventing it from falling back into religious routine or congealing into an ideological system." The meaning that this can have for people is that the relationship between God and themselves will always be more surprising than predictable and more extravagant than fair.

In addition, the resurrection of Jesus is a manifestation of the forgiveness that marks God's relationship with humanity. Jesus "does not return as a judge to expose the betrayal

and obtuseness of the disciples....The disciples' guilt and failure were not therefore the determining factors in their relationships to him and to the God he reveals." The risen Jesus confronts his followers not with judgment and punishment; they are not sinners being called to repentance. John's gospel in particular makes clear that Jesus greets his followers in peace and blesses them with the same. Jesus gives to them the gift of the Holy Spirit, generously entrusting them to forgive others as they themselves have been forgiven. And Jesus tells them that they also may retain, i.e. not forgive, but instead "confront and unmask the evil in the still-conflicted world to which they have been sent." For Christians and for people considering becoming same, the resurrection of Jesus meets them with a love that casts out fear and that instills in them a humble confidence to carry forward Christ' ministry of reconciliation.

Christ's resurrection means God's power at work beyond the power of anything or anyone else to determine our lives; it means a divine generosity beyond the limits of what we think is fair or what we think we deserve either positively or negatively; it means forgiveness that lifts us from God's judgment against us or our judgment against others, to a position of inspiration and responsibility as agents of God's work being done in the world today.

These are some of the meanings that Christ's resurrection has for people today. And these are some of the meanings that this community of the same name has for people toward whom we are moving outward and whom we are welcoming in. These are the meanings of our own ministry here as the Church of the Resurrection: God's power moving here; God's generosity being shared here; God's grace here setting us free. And all these being opened up in Christ's name and made ever more accessible to the wider community whom we serve.

As our physical campus is opened up this summer, so may our hearts and minds and very lives be opened up even more in comparison. May we find renewed meaning in the lives, the cares, the joys, the life-lessons that we are opening ourselves to receive. May we all find renewed sense of what meaning Christ's resurrection has for us, and the meaning that we have for Christ as the community of his Resurrection.

God's Peace. *Jim +*