



Easter Sunday April 8, 2012 B

A love that sees in the dark

The following piece is from *Seasons of the Word* by English Redemptorist priest, Fr. Denis McBride.

The ancient story is told of a rabbi who gathered all his students together very early in the morning while it was still dark. He told them to pay attention because he had a very important question to ask them. The question was this: How could they tell when night had ended and the day was on its way back.

One student answered: "Could it be when you see an animal and can tell whether it is a sheep or a dog?"

"No," answered the rabbi.

Another student said: "Could it be when you look at a tree in the distance and can tell whether it is a fig tree or a peach tree?"

"No," answered the rabbi.

After a few more guesses the students demanded: "Well, then, what is it?"

"It is when you look on the face of any woman or man and see that she is your sister and he is your brother. Because if you cannot do this, then no matter what time it is, it is still night."

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When the going gets tough in the journey of life, we need that attitude of the mule in the following story.

This is a parable told about a farmer whose mule fell into a well. The farmer heard the mule 'praying' or whatever mules do when they fall into wells. After carefully assessing the situation, the farmer sympathized with the mule, but decided that neither the mule nor the well was worth the trouble of saving. Instead, he called his neighbors together and told them what had happened...and enlisted them to help haul dirt to bury the old mule in the well and put him out of his misery.

Initially, the old mule was hysterical! But as the farmer and his neighbors continued shoveling and the dirt hit his back...a thought struck him. It suddenly dawned on him that every time a shovel load of dirt landed on his back...

HE SHOULD SHAKE IT OFF AND STEP UP!

This he did, blow after blow. "Shake it off and step up... Shake it off and step up... Shake it off and step up!" He repeated this to encourage himself. No matter how painful the blows, or how distressing the situation

seemed, the old mule fought panic and just kept right on shaking it off and stepping up!

It wasn't long before the old mule, battered and exhausted, stepped triumphantly over the wall of that well! What seemed like it would bury him, actually helped him...all because of the manner in which he handled his adversity.

That's life! If we face our problems and respond to them positively, and refuse to give in to panic, bitterness, or self-pity...the adversities that come along to bury us usually have within them the very real potential to benefit us! (Author unknown)

In all the accounts of the resurrection, Mary of Magdala (alone or with any number of her companions) comes to the tomb while it is still dark. She feels the predawn darkness around her and within her: a void of hopelessness, a crushing sense of loss, grief that cannot be articulated in words.

Easter begins in the dark of night. If you have ever kept vigil, worried to death at the bedside of a loved one, if you have ever been unable to sleep because of what was to come, if you have ever been overwhelmed by doubt or grief, Easter has dawned in your life. God has been with you through those long hours; God has embraced you in your isolation; God has come in the morning.

Easter begins in the dark earth. Easter is a seed planted in the new spring soil that struggles through the winter hardness to blossom. If you've ever struggled to change or worked hard to remake your life in the wake of loss, hurt or devastation, Easter has dawned in your life. Easter is that light that reveals death is not the final ending but the passage way to the God who first breathed life into you.

Easter begins in ashes. If you've ever been swallowed up in hopelessness or fear or if you've ever been paralyzed by hurt or ill-treatment, Easter has dawned in your life. No matter how hard we fall, no matter how broken we are, no matter how deep the chasm into which we've fallen, Easter is the Risen One walking in your midst in the compassion of loved ones, the support of friends, the dedication of saints.

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Easter Sunday Dinner Prayer

Creative God and Lord of life,
you who call forth from the darkness of death
all those who love you,
we rejoice, on this Easter Sunday,
in the resurrection from the dead
of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

Visit our home and this table
with your bright blessing of peace and life.

We pause in the midst of this prayer
to remember all the holy dead of our family
who live now in you and who await
the final and glorious resurrection of the dead.
May they and we, because of our faith in you,
our God, taste in the victory of life over death.

May the Risen Christ, our Lord and Savior,
be our guest as we celebrate his resurrection
with this Easter Sunday dinner.

Bless those whose work to prepare this meal
has truly been a work of prayer,
and bless all of us who shall share it
with Easter love and joy.

May you then bless this table and this food,
and each of us in your holy name:
Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Gather your family together and pray the following:

An Easter House Blessing

Lord, we rejoice in the victory of your Son over death.

By rising from the tomb to new life
He gives us new hope and promise.

Bless all the members of this household
and surround us with your protection,
that we may find comfort and peace
in Jesus Christ, the Paschal Lamb
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Sprinkle the rooms of the house with holy water and
pray: *Let this water call to mind our baptism in Christ
who by his death and resurrection has redeemed us.*

Have a blessed Easter,

