



HELPFUL STORIES ON THE MEANING OF EASTER

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."

A love that sees in the dark

Easter began in the dark and began in the tomb. The story begins with someone whom many had written off as a lost cause: Mary Magdalene. When she reaches the tomb she sees that the stone is rolled away, and she interprets this to mean that Jesus' body must have been stolen. She finds it easier to believe in the night-time antics of grave robbers than the night-time antics of a God who refuses to let death have the last word.

When Peter and the Beloved Disciple hear her story, they immediately start running for the tomb, and we have a marvelous action picture of the Easter jog! The Beloved Disciple runs faster than Peter, reaches the tomb first, looks in to see the cloths lying on the ground, and then waits for Peter. Peter goes in and sees the cloths. The climax of the story is when the Beloved Disciple goes in and sees the same evidence: in contrast to Peter, he believes. He sees more than discarded cloths; he sees with the eyes of faith what this means. His is a love that sees through the dark.

One of the marks of John's Gospel is the special love between Jesus and one of the disciples. The Beloved Disciple is presented as the ideal follower of Jesus, the one who is closest to him at the Last Supper, and the one who stands at the foot of the cross when he dies. Now in running to the tomb on Easter morning, the urgency of his love gets him there first, and the sensitivity of his love makes him the first to believe. And, later it is the Beloved

Disciple who informs Peter: "It is the Lord." His is a love that gets him there first.

If Peter enjoys the "primacy of authority," the Beloved disciple enjoys the "primacy of love." This takes nothing away from Peter: it just means that, in Paul's phrase, "If love can persuade" it can get you to the point quicker!

Seeing more

So we look to the quality of our own seeing and hope, so that when the time comes we, too, will have the love to enable us to see through the dark. In celebrating Easter we rejoice in the light that darkness cannot overpower; we celebrate that God raised Jesus from the dead and that he extends that homecoming to all of us; we bless God for the faith that challenges us always to see more in others because we love him.

In that Easter faith we can answer the question of the old rabbi. We can tell that the night is gone and the day is on its way back when we can look on the face of our brother and sister and see something extraordinary. We can catch a glimpse of the Messiah.

The above reflection was written by Fr. Dennis McBride, C.S.S.R.

Learning from the mule how to deal with adversity.

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 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!

Reflection Question

When life throws dirt at you, what helps you to shake it off and step up? Of course as Christians we believe that we not only need a lot of determination and perseverance to deal with adversity, we also need the grace of God, family and friends.

A Real Easter Egg

Jay Cormier writes:

A small chick begins the long journey to birth. The not-yet-a-bird weighs little more than air; its beak and claws are barely pin pricks. The bird-to-be is in its own little world: protected by the rigid shell, warmed by the mother hen's body, nourished by the nutrients within the egg's membrane.

But then the chick begins the work of life. Over several days the chick keeps picking and picking until it can break out from its narrow world—and into an incomparably wider one.

But for this to happen the egg has to go to pieces. New life demands shattering the old.

That is the real Easter egg. Not a complete egg dyed and painted with so many designs and colors. Not an egg that has been hardboiled, impossible to shatter. Not an egg made of chocolate.

The real Easter egg is shattered and destroyed. The real Easter egg exists in broken pieces. The real Easter egg is cracked opened, yielding new life that has taken flight.

For centuries, the world has marked the Resurrection of the Lord with eggs. But the Easter meaning of the egg is found in the struggle of the chick to free itself from its confines so as to take flight into much bigger world beyond it. We struggle to break out of a world that we perceive is going to pieces; we pick away at an existence that leaves us dissatisfied and unfulfilled. The promise of the Easter Christ is that we can break out of our self-contained little worlds and take flight into a world where peace and justice reign, a world illuminated by hope and warmed by love, a world that extends beyond time and place into the forever of God's dwelling place.

A Teen's Easter Prayer
(from www.homefaith.com)

What's so awesome about Easter is all the surprise. What people thought was ending, God turned into a

beginning. And what began as something sad, in three days' time turned into endless joy.

Dear God, help me to remember the surprising, unexpected ways of Jesus: When the people expected a king, he chose to hang out with fishermen and kids. When people expected him to take charge, to take prisoners, to take back Jerusalem, he taught that real power lies in persuading the human heart.

Dear God, help me live the surprising ways of Jesus: When friends expect me to always be a certain way, let me show how the unexpected can be better. When my family does the same old boring stuff, help me show how new ways can work, too, or at least surprise them by not complaining. When I expect myself to fail, or my parents to misunderstand, or my siblings to get it wrong, grant me the wisdom not to jump to conclusions, so that they get the chance to surprise me, too.

By Mary Lynn Hendrickson

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.*

A big Thank You to all who helped to make our Lenten and Holy Week services prayerful. If you are a Catholic and do not attend church regularly, please know that our church family is less than it can be without you worship and involvement in the parish just as any family is less when one member chooses not to participate in activities of the family.

Have a blessed week,

Le Sarah