

## Easter in Us: “Real Change”

- 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter
- May 3, 2015
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In this fifty-day celebration of Easter, you could say that first of all it is about “Easter in Him”, and then about “Easter in them”, and now about “Easter in us”. “Easter in Him” is Jesus risen, in a garden with a beloved woman friend, walking along a road with a disappointed couple, in a room with disciples saying “It is I; do not be afraid. Look at the wounds in my hands and feet. Do you have anything to eat?” then, “Thomas, put your hand here in my side; it is I”; and then on a shore in Galilee calling out at dawn to fishermen, “Lads, have you caught anything?” That’s what we might call “Easter in Him”. “Easter in Him” essentially is, “It is I.”

“Easter in them” is what we have been reading about Peter and John healing a cripple, speaking out boldly to the elders, being whipped and rejoicing to have suffered for the Name; it is a community sharing its goods and breaking bread together; Philip explaining the scriptures and baptizing an Ethiopian. “Easter in Them” most clearly is Paul—as in the first reading—putting fear into the hearts of the apostles in Jerusalem, exclaiming that he has seen the risen Jesus just as much as they had and that Jesus has spoken to him, converted him, so that now he spoke so boldly and brashly that the apostles had to spirit him out of Jerusalem onto a boat shipping him out to his hometown at Tarsus in order to cool it so that he would not be killed, and so that peace could return to the Jerusalem community after Paul the Whirlwind had blown into town. That’s “Easter in them”—the real Jesus risen and alive in them. “Easter in them” essentially is apostolic boldness.

Now it is the time of “Easter in us”. John is our guide introducing us to the risen Jesus who is the good shepherd who knows us and calls us by name so that we follow him and are led by him out into good pasture. Or today John guides us to “Easter in us” with his instruction of how we are branches on the vine of the risen Jesus, drawing life and sap from him through faith, being fruitful by abiding, remaining, dwelling in him as the branch in the vine. “Easter in us” is the very life of the risen Jesus flowing in us, bringing us alive in a new way, being placed and having our home in the risen Jesus, and he taking up the home of his risen life in us. That’s “Easter in us”. “Easter in us” essentially is “He in us”.

Let me tell you a story, a true story. (All Jesuit stories are true stories!) This one comes from a week ago Friday. It goes this way. About three months ago, inspired by Pope Francis, I decided that every dollar bill I would ever receive or have in my wallet I would look upon as not belonging to me, but belonging to the poor, and that on any occasion, without judgement when asked by the poor for help I’d give them their dollar. So on that Friday afternoon I was hoofing it to my bank down on Madison and spied a man with a paper cup asking for help. Out came a dollar; into the cup it went; I looked the man in the eye; asked him how he was doing; and shook his hand.

Less than a block away stood another man on the corner of Madison and Boren selling the newspaper “Real Change”. So out came two one-dollar bills and I handed him his dollars and

bought the paper. This man too I looked in the eye, shook his hand, and asked him how he was doing. He told me, “Father, I’m doing great! Yesterday I was at the Community Resource Exchange of the United Way at CenturyLink.” I told him I had been there too with two other Jesuits and a couple thousand homeless for a one-stop full range of imaginable services for the homeless. My man on the corner selling “Real Change” said, “I just could not believe it; when the doors opened at 9:00 and we walked in there were hundreds of volunteers who applauded us, the homeless, applauded us as we walked in. It was so amazing that I broke down in tears.” Imagine the homeless applauded. That was the resource that was most important. He told me that his next most favorite thing was getting a haircut, having his feet washed and tended, and getting a job interview for the next day. He’s the happiest man I’ve met this month; and all for two bucks—which already belonged to him anyway rather than to me—a look in the eye, a handshake, and missing a pedestrian crossing light twice for a conversation at a corner.

I am wondering if he is not an image of the risen Jesus. Is Jesus standing at the corner selling “real change”—you know like real change in our lives, real vine-sap life of his life flowing joyfully into us, real change in our stopping and not judging, real change in our applauding and giving respect to the homeless, the jailed, the poor? Jesus standing on the corner of our lives selling real change in us—“Easter in us”—for two bucks: one buck for the other; and one buck for God so he can spend it to bring about the kingdom among us?

Then I wonder about a fourth Easter: an Easter beyond “Easter in Him”, “Easter in them”, and “Easter in us”, what we might call the “Easter in the Kingdom”, the final Easter. Could it be that the Easter in the Kingdom will be like that Community Resource Exchange where we together with the poor will be applauded on our arrival and will find there in the transformed hall of the Earth all and more than we could possibly want or need—more than haircuts, dental work, foot washings, socks and shoes, identity photos, food stamps, mammograms, lunch and takeaway food, hygiene kits, blankets and backpacks, and the real resource exchange of festive community. There we will find our Easter, our rising in him, Jesus everywhere and us with him in God. Some “exchange” that will be! “Easter in the Kingdom” will be all of us together with Him in the Father.

Look for Jesus selling real change on the corners of your life and let him “Easter in you, be a dayspring to the dimness of you, a crimson-cresssetted East”.