

The Feast of the Resurrection: Easter Sunday
Year B
April 1, 2018

First Reading: Acts 10:34-43

Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24

Second Reading: I Corinthians 15:1-11

Gospel: Mark: 16:1-8

Preached by The Rev. John A. Satula
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In the name of God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit
Amen.

Happy Easter! Alleluia Christ is Risen! I have been looking forward to saying those words for a while now, although earlier this week I was feeling some apprehension as those words approached and my sermon for today as of Wednesday morning was still a blank page, despite the help I had had from a friend. We had been conversing about Holy Week and Easter, and she asked how my sermons were coming. At that point they were all in various stages of completion, except for my Easter sermon. I said to her, "I still do not know what to preach about. Any ideas?" Now, I admit that probably wasn't the best way to phrase the question, especially to this person. She spoke with almost a hint of urgency in her voice, sincerely, very candidly, very honestly saying, "Hmm, I don't know, you could preach about the Resurrection." I thanked my mother for her help. "Anytime" she replied. And from that point on kept my Easter sermon musings to myself.

I cannot help but waking on this morning with a smile on my face and I hope that is true for all of you. Whether it is cloudy or sunny, rainy or foggy, yes even if it is snowing, I always wake on this morning with a smile. I remember the year after college waking in the early morning on Easter while it was still dark out. I think it was around

4AM--still too early to get up. I tossed and turned but could not go back to sleep. I lay there waiting impatiently, for that first beam of light to break through the blinds proclaiming "Easter had broken o'er the purple east." It finally happened and I got up with excitement and shouted Happy Easter! I quickly got ready and headed to Church, as I had to be there for our early service as well as our later service. This was the case every Sunday.

On that Easter, I was an Aspirant, the unofficial title of someone aspiring to ministry in the Episcopal Church. I was working at my Church, Grace Church and with the Rector Father Matthews, discerning the call I had felt from God to Ordained ministry. One of my responsibilities was attending all of our Sunday services. I remember arriving and walking through the Church doors with a big smile that day. Smiling had become a big part of my life that year.

I feel there are two types of people in this world, those who are extraverts and those who like me are introverts. One on one, I am fine. I am also fine in a large group as long as I know people. It is when I enter a large gathering and do not know people that my "introvertedness" shines through. When I began as an Aspirant I was very shy. I did not know too many people at the Church. The perfect place to get to know people, at least in the Episcopal Church, is during coffee hour. I dreaded coffee hour, as beginning conversations was not my strong suit. I tended to make sporadic appearances of one or two minutes and then disappear into my office. Some parishioners had noticed my shyness and were becoming a little concerned because I had been there now for about a month and they weren't really getting to know me or I them. The Rector had noticed this too and was also concerned as you do not have to

be an extrovert to be a priest, however, it is important to know your parishioners. He had voiced this concern to me several times and I was trying my best to address it or as he would put it, “come out of my shell”

Since beginning at Grace Church that year, one of the practices Father Matthews had me engage in to help me discern my call to ministry was Spiritual Direction. Father Matthews was very close with his Spiritual Director, Brother Maurice, a monk who was part of the Christian Community of St. Gregory’s, a monastic community of the Episcopal Church. He agreed to also become my Spiritual Director. A Spiritual Director is someone who guides both clergy and laypersons into deepening their relationship with God and to grow into their own spirituality. Over the short time I had known Brother Maurice I had really come to like him. He was so very humble and kind. He had a very soothing personality. He was very interested in hearing about my call to ministry and I found him very easy to talk to. I remember once sitting with him on his back porch. I said to him, “I am having a hard time getting to know and build relationships with people in the parish.” He asked me why I thought this was. I said well, I have been told I am an introvert, and this is inhibiting me.” He thought for a moment and then said to me, I want you to try something and said one word, “smile. When you walk into a room, smile. Smiling puts others at ease and makes us, whoever we are, more approachable.” He then added “you might find it will put you more at ease as well. So smile.” I drove home that afternoon thinking this was useless advice and had no intention of even trying it. The following Sunday however, as I approached the Parish Hall for dreaded coffee hour, Brother Maurice’s voice came into my head, “smile, smile John.” I said to myself fine, I smiled and walked into the Parish Hall. The next time we

met, the first thing he said to me was, “have you been smiling?” I told him how his advice of smiling was probably some of the best advice I had ever been given. It truly helped me open up and “come out of my shell” as I found, like he said, it put me at ease and relaxed me in my struggles.

We arrive here today and make a journey. We journey with Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome to Jesus’ tomb and are met with a startling sight, the stone to the entrance to the tomb has been rolled back. What does this mean? We enter the tomb with the women and see a young man robed in white who gives shocking, outrageous news, “Do not be alarmed; you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; He is not here. Look, there is the place they laid Him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter that He is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see Him.” Every year we come to the tomb and hear this extraordinary, tremendous outrageous news, that Jesus Christ is Risen! We eventually then leave the tomb just as the women did and go forth. This is always the same, however our circumstances and the reasons we make this journey to the tomb can change from year to year.

As we hear the news today, He is not here, He is risen, what emotions are we feeling today? What is happening in your life today? I feel the account we hear of the women coming to the tomb is so special because these women are us in 2018. Like them we have come to the tomb and like them we leave the tomb flooded with a range of emotions. We know the story, we know what we will find when we reach the tomb, we know we will find it empty, but what does that mean for us, for our lives today in 2018? What does it mean for you? I invite us to ponder this, I invite us to wonder, I

invite us to question. And in our pondering, in our wondering, in our questioning, in the emotions we are feeling in our lives today, whether they be feelings of excitement, amazement, apprehension, anger, fear, sadness, doubt, I invite you to leave the tomb today and allow yourselves, to in the words of Brother Maurice, smile, simply smile, for this news, this extraordinary news, this tremendous news, this outrageous news, this Good News, is our Good News. As we hear in First Corinthians today, “I would remind you, brothers and sisters, of the good news that I proclaimed to you, which you in turn received, **in which also you stand, through which also you are being saved.**” The news we hear today is for us. Let us smile helping us to feel the hope and the joy in the news we hear today, help us know it is a part of our lives, help us to know the Good News we hear today no matter what we are going through, never changes, “you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; He is not here.” He has gone ahead of us and we can see Him, we are invited to see Him in our lives. Smile for this is good news every year and every day, for “On this the day the Lord has acted” and we, we, whoever we are, whatever is happening in life, we “can rejoice and be glad in it” for what has happened today, the giving of everlasting life, has happened for all. Let our smiles help us know and feel and reinforce that the news we hear today is for us and put us a little more at ease as we continue through our daily lives knowing the Resurrection is always there for us. The Resurrection changed everything, because it transcends everything, flooding our life, our being, our Spirit, with its Good News, the Good News that through the events of the last three days forgiveness has been shed upon us and we have won everlasting life through Jesus Christ, our Saviour.

My friends, this Easter come to the tomb with all the emotions you are feeling. Bring your joys and hardships and come as our final hymn says, “with glad smile and radiant brow.” Today the impossible became possible. Let us come to the tomb, let us gaze in, and let us smile, knowing that what we see was done for us, what we hear is for us, Jesus Christ is Risen today! It is hope, bringing joy to this world and joy to us, in sin and death's destruction and the promise of eternal life given by Christ, by God, to all. So what do we do with this news? Smile and share it with others!

All Glory, Majesty, Praise and Honor be given unto our Risen Lord. Amen.