

Sermon Year C Easter 2
Acts 5.27-32; Psalm 118.14-29 or Psalm 150; Revelation 1.4-8; John 29.19-31

Alleluia! The Lord is Risen!

Yes, alleluias have once again returned to our liturgical language and the presence of the Paschal candle is seen and will continue to be lit through Pentecost. You may have also noticed that, in our scripture selections during the Easter season, we read from the Book of Acts rather than from the Old Testament. We are in the season of becoming new ... re-mem-bering the resurrected Jesus as our companion on the way. We will continue in the Easter season of the church year for the next 50 days.

Today, on the second Sunday of Easter we hear many things in our scripture readings, and, mostly, we think about doubting Thomas on this day, maybe because there is a little doubt in each of us. And, if we have not wrestled with this doubt, we have missed one of the gifts God has given us ... that of free will. We are here this morning because we believe what has been told to us through

scripture and acknowledge that the Word of God gives us life and the tools to survive in an alien world.

I was reminded this week of what the Gospel does for us this morning ... beyond being “doubting Thomas Sunday.”

I had not realized what was involved until I became intrigued by the phrase, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.’ When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained’”.¹

My quest began with the final phrase, “If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.” I have wondered about this for years, and this week had the luxury of time to research it further.

My discovery is that, in the Gospel of John, this is John’s way of telling us that Jesus, the new Adam, is actually commissioning the disciples for their work in the world from this point on, much like

¹ NRSV John 20.21-23

the end of Matthew give us the commission to go preach to the ends of the world. It was Jesus' way of telling this room full of frightened followers, who had really seen Jesus as the Messiah for the first time, that they were ready to go forth and do and be the Word of God for the world to see.

So my question, not only to myself, but my invitation to you is just how are we going to live out (or into) our own commissioning over the 50 days of Easter. How is our story going to be linked to *the* story? How can we show the world that we, too, are part of that story in our being and in our doing? Just how will we show others that the community within the very walls of this beloved community not only talks its walk but walks its talk?

This is a question that we must answer individually and corporately. And, for those of you who have already begun by actively participating in the focus groups we thank you. You have begun to link your story to *the* story. You are the past, the present and the future of St. Paul's. (For those of you who have not yet been

able to participate, know that your time is coming, because the Discernment Team will find you!)

A few years back I read a reflection written by a Laurie Brock in the Forward Movement Website called *50 Days of Fabulous* a few years back. She tells us ...

“I had taken my college students to San Francisco to attend the conference for Episcopal college ministries, and we were attending an interfaith remembrance for Archbishop Oscar Romero at Grace Cathedral. The parade of speakers, combined with the general college ministry schedule of sleep-is-for-the-weak led to my attention soon drifting off. Suddenly, I snapped back to focus. On the dais was a local Hindu monk, speaking in a thoughtful, even lilt.

‘Last week I received this box of bullets,’ he mused.

Fantastic, I thought, inwardly cringing. It’s a death threat. Some loony fundamentalist sent this nice guy a box of bullets to scare him.

As I carried on a cynical monologue in my head, about the awfulness of humanity, the monk explained that certainly he had

canvassed his neighbors, and figured out that the bullet box was, in fact, a mis-delivery. It had been intended for his downstairs neighbor – a federal agent of some variety.

‘But he had already received a replacement, so I thought *What can I do with these? What would bring peace, what would resurrect these weapons?*

“He held up a bowl filled with golden pebbles. ‘So I melted them down, and I made them into prayer beads. Because, I thought, you would like to have them. So take one, please, everyone. We can bring some resurrection together.’

“I still have mine,” Brock continued. “It lives in my jacket pocket, and it reminds me that resurrection isn’t just a singular act, once-and-boom! event. It’s a repeated, habitual transformational re-making of the world in which we participate.”²

It’s a repeated, habitual transformational re-making of the world in which we participate. #

² Brock, Laurie, *50 Days of Fabulous*, Forward Day by Day website, April 4, 2013 meditation

How will you choose to live into the resurrection between now and the end of the 50 days of Easter? How will your turning bullets into prayer beads change you and change the world, individually and as a member of this dear church family?

What *are* the bullets that you can turn into prayer beads? With God's help I know you will find them and change someone's life ... just as our collect for this second Sunday of Easter suggests:

“Almighty and everlasting God, who in the Paschal mystery established a new covenant of reconciliation: Grant that all who have been reborn into the fellowship of Christ's Body may show for their lives what they profess by their faith, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God for ever and ever. Amen.”

Alleluia, the Lord is risen!

Thanks be to God.