

Easter Day A (4/24/11 – *Raised to Newness of Life in Christ*)

In the Name of JESUS. [Amen]

Have you ever noticed that so many things dealing with Christ and faith seem to be hidden? Even the glory of Christ on that most glorious resurrection morning – the event we celebrate today – seems to have been hidden. It is the angel whose *appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow* [MT 28.3]. It is the angel who appears glorious – so glorious, in fact, that *for fear of him the guards trembled and became like dead men* [28.4]. And he has to tell the women who came with spices to finish Jesus’ burial: *Do not be afraid* [28.5] – otherwise they probably would have done the same.

By contrast, from the Resurrection account we heard at the Sunrise Service – from St. John’s Gospel – even the **resurrected** Jesus was quite common in appearance. Mary did not even recognize Him at first, but *supposing Him to be the gardener, said to Him, “Sir, if You have carried Him away, tell me where You have laid Him, and I will take Him away.”* [JN 20.15] It was not until Jesus called her name that she realized it **was** the Lord.

But the truth of the reality is far greater than appearances indicate. The angel – no matter how glorious in appearance ... no matter how fear-inducing – is still only a ministering spirit [MT 4.11; HEB 1.7] ... a created being. His glory is not his own. Christ Jesus, on the other hand, for all His seeming commonality, is none other than the Son of God in human flesh ... and *the One appointed by God to be Judge of the living and the dead* [ACTS 10.42]. The all-glorious Son of God is the One Who was stricken, smitten, and afflicted ... Whose hands, feet, and side were pierced. The all-glorious Son of God is the One Who shed His holy, innocent Blood for the salvation of the world and died on **Good Friday**. His only “glory” was a crown of thorns. His only “praise” was the

mocking of the crowds and the thieves crucified on either side.

Now He has broken the bonds of death ... crashed the gates of hell ... opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers ... and risen from the grave. Yet, it is not **His** appearance that is like lightning. It is not **His** clothing that is as white as snow. Jesus just looks normal – indeed, can be mistaken for the gardener – even on this, His glorious resurrection day.

Our flesh wants to see something else ... something greater. Why doesn't Jesus appear as He did on the Mount of Transfiguration? Why doesn't He show at least that much of His glory on this glorious day? He is Lord and God and Christ. Yes, our glory-seeking flesh may wish to see the risen Christ appear in some glorious fashion. In that way we are no different from the Jewish leaders and mockers who hurled insults at our God when He hung dying on His Cross. *Let Him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in Him* [MT 27.42]. In that way we are like the *Jews* who *demand signs* and *Greeks* who *seek wisdom* [1COR 1.22].

However, *we walk by faith, not by sight* [2COR 5.7]. That is true of the Lord's resurrection ... and of His gracious presence in our midst in Word and Sacrament – most especially the true Body and Blood presence of the crucified and risen Christ in His Holy Supper. But it is also true of our own Christian lives – and of the fruits of Christ's death and resurrection **in** our lives. Even after the glorious resurrection, the glory of Christ is hidden. And it is hidden most in our own Christian lives.

Since we have been considering Holy Baptism throughout *Lent* and also this *Holy Week*, let us consider again this morning the hidden-ness of the glory of Christ and His glorious work of our redemption in **this** Gift. God says through St. Paul *that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death ... we were buried therefore with Him by Baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness*

of life. [ROM 6.3-4]

So, I ask you: *Do you see the newness of life in which you walk, since by your Holy Baptism you have been buried with Christ and raised with Christ by the glory of the Father?* Do we not, most often, see our old, sinful flesh – our old very **inglorious** thoughts and words and deeds? It is true enough, sadly, that we fail to **walk as children of light** [EPH 5.8]. We keep falling into the old darkness of sin.

And mind you, we must **daily** fight against that sin. We must **daily** return to our Baptism and, by **daily** contrition and repentance, drown and put to death our Old Adam together with all sins and evil desires – to paraphrase Dr. Luther. Only in that way can the new man – the gloriously redeemed believer – daily emerge and arise to live before God in righteousness and purity. We dare not keep on walking and living in the darkness of sin. We must not consider repentance simply a **Lent** and **Holy Week** “thing.” Otherwise, our celebration of the Lord’s Resurrection will only be a yearly “thing.”

For the hidden truth and glory is this: that *as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ* [GAL 3.27]. The reality that we do not yet see – not as it is ... not as it should be – is that *we were buried therefore with Him by Baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.* For Christ our dear Lord and Savior most certainly *was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father.* There were, literally, hundreds of resurrection witnesses [1COR 15.5-8]. Indeed, even those who vehemently wished to deny that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, bear witness to the resurrection of our Lord, since it is they who insisted that the tomb be sealed and a watch be set. Otherwise, they could have successfully claimed that the body had been stolen in the night.

Therefore, what God says about our Baptism in Christ is also most

certainly true. Holy Baptism connects you to Jesus' death. Holy Baptism joins you to Christ in the hidden glory of His resurrection. By Holy Baptism you have been ***Raised to Newness of Life in Christ*** – and now stand in that ***Newness of Life in Christ***.

Thus, the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ is not merely an incredible story – to give some nebulous encouragement in the midst of your own trials and tribulations and sufferings. No, the death and resurrection of Jesus is **THE STORY** ... of all history. And you are connected to that story directly – by the waters of Holy Baptism ... by the preaching of the Gospel ... and by the Body and Blood of the crucified and risen Christ in His Holy Supper. You see, God does not merely **tell** you His story. He makes you a **part** of His eternal story.

And since by Holy Baptism you have ***put on Christ***, **CHRIST'S** story is **your** story – even if you cannot fully see it yet ... even when what you see seems to contradict it. And that story is glorious – even though, for now, that glory remains hidden. ***God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him. The Jews – and our sins – put Him to death by hanging Him on a tree, but God raised Him on the third day. ... To Him all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins through His Name.*** [ACTS 10.38-42]

For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ Who is your Life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. [COL 3.3-4] You have been ***Raised to Newness of Life in Christ*** – and will be raised to eternal life in Christ on the Last Day.

Alleluia. Christ is risen! [He is risen, indeed. Alleluia!]

In the Name of the FATHER and of the ✠ SON and of the HOLY SPIRIT. [Amen]