

Rev. Paul A. Hottinger

Pondering the Resurrection Holy Land Pilgrimage Saturday, November 1, 2014
Church of the Holy Sepulchre Eph; Col 3:1-4; **Jn 20:1-9** (What does it really mean to rise from the dead?)

So we are reading today from the Gospel of John. It's a very interesting story about how Peter and John run to the tomb but out of respect the beloved disciple stands back and lets Peter enter first. And what does Peter see? **He sees the burial cloths rolled up and the face cloth separate**—a very interesting detail. What Peter makes of this is not said, but then the **beloved disciple** enters and he sees and he believes. He **perceives the meaning** of this. It's quite simply that the body was not stolen. Thieves would never roll up the cloths neatly and put the face cloth separately. That is too neat. **That indicates some sort of orderly exit.** And by the way, **the stone was rolled back not so Jesus could leave, but so that they could get in.**

So this morning event on the first Easter is told by the beloved disciple and he admits that as yet they didn't understand that Jesus had to rise from the dead, even though he had said this various times. **It takes a long time for things to sink into our minds**, what things really mean. **So we have to really ponder: What does it really mean to rise from the dead?** It's not the same thing as the miracle of Lazarus coming forth. Whatever that was about, Lazarus died later. It's not like the widow of Nain's son being raised up. He died again. This is something else. **It's a transformation to an entirely unheard of, unimagined level of existence. And it's for that actually we are created in the first place.** God creates us to be with him in eternity. St. Paul says, "Eye has not seen, ear has not heard, the mind of man has never imagined what that is." And although we can't imagine it and we can't see it and can't hear it, we should nonetheless reflect on it, consider it, consider what kind of reality we are really in, a reality we can't really touch. We are immersed in it. It's where we come from.

We can't touch it. We can't see it. We can't even imagine what it's like. And yet it is so real. It's more real than what we do see.

What we do see comes and goes. Well, this is remarkable. This church has been here a long time. And yet even this is nothing in contrast to the world. And the world itself, the earth itself, has been here for a long time, but under many changes. Mountain ranges have come and gone. Nations have come and gone. Cultures have come and gone. Countless millions and billions of people have come and gone. That's what we see. That's what we know about. **But what we are created for is something else, something far more remarkable, far more beautiful. It's only hinted at in these stories.**

We know that when the disciples do see Jesus, **they don't recognize him until he does something.** He said, "Mary." That wakes her up. That's that personal call. So it isn't seeing the resurrected Christ that gives her the clue. It's the word, her name in her ears gives her the clue. On the road to Emmaus it's not talking with him, listening to him, his explanation of Scripture, which itself was remarkable and should have given them some pause to wonder: Well, who is this guy who knows all this stuff? But it doesn't. But when he breaks the bread, then their eyes are opened. **So the opening of our eyes and the opening of our ears and recognition of life is really a grace.** It is this grace that we need to pray for, for ourselves and for our loved ones.