

Acts 10:34a, 37-43  
Ps 118:1-2, 16-17, 22-23  
Col 3:1-4 or I Cor 5:6b-8  
Jn 20:1-9

Donald X. Burt, O.S.A.

Good Friday was the end of the journey for the Pilgrim God, Jesus Christ. After 33 years of walking and talking with human beings he ended his pilgrimage on earth by dying on the cross. Easter Sunday was the beginning of his life as God Triumphant, his life beyond death.

This was actually the third stage in the life of the Son of God. The first was that life lived from all eternity with the Father and Spirit beyond time. The second was the life of pilgrimage on earth begun in the womb of Mary and ending with his death on Calvary. Easter Sunday marked the beginning of the third stage where Jesus-God would (with the Father and Holy Spirit) reign triumphant in heaven surrounded by all those whom he had saved by his sacrifice.

The days after Easter were the time of a triumphant God, but it was an odd triumph. It was hidden from most of the human race. As today's Gospel reports, Mary of Magdala and Peter and John, even after seeing the empty tomb,

Did not yet understand the Scripture that he had to rise from the dead  
*John, 20:9*

They now knew and believed that the tomb was empty but what had happened to Jesus's body was still unknown to them. Only sometime later could Peter proudly proclaim (in the words of today's first reading):

This man God raised on the third day and granted that he be visible, not to all people, but to us, the witnesses chosen by God in advance, who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead.  
*Acts of the Apostles 10:40-41*

Most of this old world was about the same on Easter Sunday as it had been on Palm Sunday. But this was so because the triumph of God was more of heaven than of earth. The triumphant God had opened heaven, not changed earth. Jesus-God had forced open the gates of heaven slammed shut by the stupidity of human beings who in Eden had abandoned God to make their own way in the world. The triumph of Jesus-God was that he saved human beings despite themselves. More accurately, he made salvation *possible* for them. Now the real battle began ... the battle to make the possibility of salvation a reality for each individual.

After the resurrection the story of God triumphant was to be told deep in the hearts of every individual. It was for this reason that he did not remain long on earth after Easter. It was for this reason that he gave the strange [and somewhat harsh] command to his dear friend Mary in the garden: "Don't touch me!" (*John 20:11-18*) The time for walking and talking with humans on the dusty roads of Palestine was over. The time had come to speak to each individual in the darkness and quiet of their own heart. The days of touching Jesus-God were over. The days of finding Jesus-God deep inside oneself had begun. The story of Jesus Christ continues after his death and resurrection even till now. But now the story is the story of his efforts to make his triumph over sin and death a personal triumph for every human being.

Today is Easter Sunday, the celebration of Christ's resurrection. Jesus Christ lives now triumphantly in heaven with his Father and here on earth in the hearts of each one of us. God-willing we will make his triumph our own. God-willing we too shall rise to see the glory and brightness of a new Easter where we will be met by our triumphant God.

Then we will end our own pilgrimage and finally and forever be at home with our flesh and blood, Jesus Christ the Lord.