

Easter Vigil

April 15 2006

Rom 6:3-11

Ps 118:1-2, 16-17, 22-23

Mk 16:1-7

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One day the devil is said to have appeared to Saint Theresa of Avila disguised as the Risen Christ. Immediately seeing that it was a trick, the saint dismissed Satan. But before Satan left he asked Theresa, "How did you know that I was an impostor?" And she answered him: because you have no wounds.

Tonight we celebrate the victory of Christ, once bruised and wounded, hanging dead on a cross but now risen and forever alive. This is the night of nights for us, the night that gives each day and night its meaning; the night without which we would still be in darkness, weighed down by discouragement and perhaps, at times, even tempted to despair.

Tonight we remember in word and song and ritual the victory of our God. We recall the long and precious story of how from the time of Abraham, our father in faith, until this day, he has led his people again and again, through slavery and oppression to freedom and life. Remembering what God has done in the past gives us courage in the present and makes us confident that, true to his word, he will be with us always.

It is not difficult to believe this pledge of God when the light is shining and all goes well, when life is good to us and our spirits are high. It is different, however, when the night lingers on and the world seems unfriendly to us: when hatred and violence intimidate and destroy; when weakness and sin cause pain and scandal; when status and authority are abused and defiled. At such times, which we relive unfortunately in our own day in our Church, in our nation and in the world, at such times we wonder where God is! But tonight's message to us is that it was precisely in a moment of darkest grief, when all seemed lost, that Jesus' victory was won. He made his presence known to those who were mourning his death and whom sorrow had filled with fear. But when he appeared to them alive, not dead, some recognized him only by his wounds! Yes, the wounds remain to remind us of what has been and sadly can be again, but the power that caused them is no more. The Resurrection of Jesus proclaims to all the world that sin does not prevail, that evil is not the champion, that light and life are, indeed, victorious.

And so, tonight we shall own the light; we shall commit ourselves once more to follow the way of the wounded Savior, and to seek to find in our own woundedness and that of others around us the power of God still at work, bringing salvation, healing and life where we might otherwise have least expected to find it.