

Homily. 3rd Sunday of Easter. Year.B. 17/18 April 2021.

I have a plant in my house that I've spent the better part of 2 years trying to nurture. I've watered it a lot and then not watered it much, I've re-potted it, moved it to different positions for more or less light, read up all about it and generally tried everything to make it healthy. Sadly, my efforts have failed. It's come to the point of death and I have no more tricks left to play. With just two very sick leaves left on it and no new shoots it's going to be tipped out on a garden bed this week. I know that the soil and what's left of this poor plant will be taken by the garden and re-used in various ways. It's the same for everything that lives and dies on this earth, ourselves included; being born, living, dying, and then back into the earth to be re-used in a different way, the great natural cycle of life.

But, we must understand that the resurrection of Jesus Christ is not like this at all. It's something entirely new, different and so much better. All of the scriptures today call out for us to notice this difference. It's vital that we do so if our faith and hope is to bring us meaning and show itself in our loving and self-giving service to others. The resurrection is about life itself being rejected, abandoned and left for dead, returning the same but now transformed into what it always had the potential to become.

Jesus always spoke of resurrection in terms of wheat grains; the sowing of the seed of the wheat into the soil which dies to itself and by doing so releases all of its potential, coming back to us as new shoots and grains to feed our life. Again, He spoke of His resurrection as being like Jonah in the whale's belly for 3 days and nights, returning right back to the beach

where he started from, still the same Jonah of course, but changed and ready at last to fulfil God's great mission of truth and mercy for all.

In Luke's gospel Jesus is at pains to assure the disciples, and all of us, that it really is the same Jesus who was Crucified and buried that has been raised. Look at His wounds of death, touch Him, watch Him eat before our eyes; Yes, it is I indeed, He says. Nothing at all like my dead plant turned into mulch or a body back to dust, let alone a ghost or some other strange apparition. He is different though, hence the need for all of His assurances. Jesus is different after His resurrection because His full potential has been released from the belly of death, bursting forth from the soil like the new born wheat that nourishes the people.

This spells, for us and for all of redeemed creation, the end of that old cycle of life story. It spells gospel for us. Our lives are no longer only a recycling back into the soil. Rather, because He is risen and alive, our living is all about our release and re-birth into the fullness of our lives, the much better and much more we've always desired and deserved as God's sons and daughters. Life itself is now being driven towards the fullness of creation, groaning like a woman in labour until it is finally set free with joy.

Friends, we no longer have to settle for the fate of my sick, failed plant, the old life-cycle saga, nature's best effort, so let's not settle for it. We are the bearers of a better pattern, a richer story, about coming back as we are but better than ever, the best we can ever be because Christ lives. It's to this that we are the witnesses; our mission to and for the world.