

WHAT'S LOVE GOT TO DO WITH IT? LOVE BRINGS FORTH LIFE

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Reflecting on Scripture often raises significant questions for us as we strive to understand and appreciate the mystery of God, how God comes to us in Jesus, or who Jesus was and why he lived and taught as he did. Sometimes those questions just spontaneously come to us after reading, studying or praying over a Scripture text. But other times, like in tonight's/today's Gospel the question is right there in the text itself. "Why do you seek the living one among the dead?" the messengers ask the women at the tomb. Good question! Why would anyone ever look for God among the dead? Have you ever tried it?

- At times all of us may be tempted to return to past eras of our lives seeking to find the God we knew there, only to discover that my youth is past and what was there for me then is no longer there for me now.
- Sometimes we allow religious faith to wither or to remain on the periphery of our lives while giving our time, energy and attention to other "more pressing" things. When we attempt to return to faith in time of special need we discover that it has died for lack of nourishment, vitality and meaning.
- Sometimes I give myself over to the death-dealing habits of sin because of a desire to look good or get ahead or just to feed my self-centered thirst for pleasure. I treat those habits like gods or at least

allow them to take the place of the real God in my life, but soon find that they do not really satisfy my need for meaning, true peace or happiness in life and rather lead me to “less life” which is to say toward death.

- Sometimes I seek God in stale rituals or old routines from what I perceive as “the good old days” only to discover that those days have passed and that those rituals and routines are no longer helpful in the afternoon of life to revive my faith or a sense of God’s presence now.
- And to all these experiences the messenger of God in this Easter Gospel asks “Why do you seek the living one among the dead?”

Although the event we celebrate in these our high holydays happened in history over 2000 years ago, believers have discovered that the reality of God’s life, love, mercy and power revealed in Jesus Christ still lives today. That is the “proof” of the resurrection that is open to all of us, a reality that St. Augustine, one of our great ancestors in faith once described as “beauty, ever ancient, ever new”. And we discover it in a variety of ways:

- In moments of quiet reflection and prayer;
- In the words of the Scriptures pondered in faith;
- In moments when I take the time to look around at my life and count my blessings;
- In those sacred moments of life like birth and death when we are overwhelmed and overawed by the mystery of God and the mystery of life;
- In the daily, sometimes hum-drum, moments of striving to be faithful to my commitments in life and to the people to whom I have committed myself;

- In the challenging moments when faced with difficult decisions or circumstances;
- In the Eucharist shared regularly with other believers in faith;
- In moments of great joy and happiness;
- In sharing what I have with the least of his brothers and sisters;
- On mountain tops, on wooded paths, along seashores, amid purple mountain majesty or on the fruited plains;
- In working for justice and peace for myself and others;
- In offering and receiving forgiveness;
- And ultimately in the many experiences and challenges of loving.

If you want to find God then look not in places of death, for God is never there. Look rather in places of life, goodness and vitality and there you will find God again. For according to Jesus' own words, "I came that they may have life and have it to the fullest."

At Easter we celebrate the victory of life and love over death and sin. Easter is not just another ritual of spring. Easter is not about Easter eggs, Easter bunnies and other natural symbols of life, though these may contribute to the message of the day. Rather Easter means

- that physical death is not the end of us; death does not have the final word;
- that God is real, powerful, and with us;
- that through a sincere and growing faith in Jesus Christ, we now can enjoy a new creation inaugurated by his resurrection;

- And that as a result of this faith we have a new way of looking at life that is not fantasy, but rather is very real.

People who were judged to have physically died, but who then were medically resuscitated and “came back” from the dead indicate that they now look at life differently and are even no longer afraid to die. They look at life in a new way and therefore live life in a new way. Imagine how your perspective would be changed if you had such a “near death experience”!

Now Jesus’ resurrection is not resuscitation, for those who are resuscitated eventually die. But Jesus resurrection means he lives forever. And it offers us a similar new outlook on life. Imagine how different life would be if you really believed that death is not the end and that your life is much more than a blip on the big screen of the universe. Once you really believe that death is not the end, then what really starts to matter in life, what takes on true importance in your life are those things that will determine and influence what your life after physical death will be.

At the core of our celebration of these holy days is the opportunity to know God and to grow in intimate relationship with him as we grow and mature in our faith. We can be, we need to be different now. But the only catch is that we cannot look for God among the dead; rather we must look for God where we there is life.

But have we answered Tina Turner’s question; “What’s love got to do with it?” The most life-giving experience we can have comes when I sincerely and actively love God and other people. Isn’t that true? Love stirs and

stimulates us like no other human experience. The ways of sin that we have turned away from this Lent are the ways that lead to death. Keeping God and other people at a distance, being too busy for God or others, and investing my time, energy and attention in things that in the end will never really satisfy me----- these are the places of death and you will never find God there. Life, vitality, faith, hope and peace are yours in Jesus Christ who is risen and they are byproducts of being a loving person.

So, Tina, if you're interested, love has *everything* to do with it.

Jesus is risen! Alleluia! Alleluia!