



Christian Education

A series of Sermons and Occasional Papers
From the clergy and members
of Holy Trinity Church
Forbes Park, Makati

Date: 8 April 2007
Title:
Comment: Insert Comment here
Author: The Rev. Tyler A. Strand

Readings for this Sunday:

First Reading Acts 10:34-43
Second Reading Colossians 3:1-4
Gospel Luke 24:1-10

Christ is risen!

A happy and holy Easter to you. I am very pleased that you have chosen to worship with us here at Holy Trinity today and to participate in the joy of Christ's Resurrection. Whatever your background or your original church home, you are welcome in our family today!

The official "party line" is that Easter is the most important festival in the Christian calendar. Some people question that, since Christmas seems to be much more generally observed each year, and seems to enjoy more sentimental attachments in most of our societies. Nevertheless, the simple fact is that unless one limits the festival to the pagan side of its family tree and keeps it as a Midwinter celebration of the return of the sun, Christmas is only the *beginning* of the Jesus story, one that doesn't offer much of an explanation as to "why", and which has grown misty with legend and pious carols. Easter remains something religious in a way that rather weak merchandizing attempts to use rabbits and eggs can't hide. And that makes it not only something for Christians to celebrate, it makes it- well- embarrassing.

Some time ago I heard about one of our young persons in a local school who was ridiculed for having religious, and in this case specifically Christian beliefs. The comments came not from a teacher, at least, but from fellow students. Of course it is a tragic sign of the times that religious beliefs can now be considered not only unpopular but ridiculous, and we are all aware of how arts and the media treat the Christian faith as something to laugh at, be afraid of, or oppose. It is true that the behavior of those who call themselves Christians isn't always exemplary. In fact, it can at times be very embarrassing. But the fact of religious belief does not always mean a lack of intelligence or sense. And our children must be told that.

I grew up thinking that there must be something wrong with me because I believed in God while my father did not. He was careful not to actually attack my beliefs and in fact allowed me to attend a Lutheran parochial school where I learned my Bible and Luther's Small Catechism (and that was rather exceptional for a good Episcopalian boy!) But I always felt that perhaps this religious phase was something I would grow out of and then I would be a good agnostic- just like Dad!

But it didn't happen. In fact, my father later became a Christian of a particularly pious sort that must be the subject of another sermon someday! Suffice it to say that he seems to have discovered something not covered in philosophy and the psychology that was his stock and trade. Something was missing, and something fell into place.

All of this fuss that we are making here this morning has to do with a simple fact that the Christian Church proclaims: the Man Jesus, the Son of God and God's own presence on earth in human form, died on a Cross outside Jerusalem some 2,000 years ago and then, as a sign of his authority to offer a new way of living, was restored to life again. Around this simple fact has evolved what you might call religion and a series of rather complicated beliefs that can be debated and argued about, as they have for the entire history of the Christian movement. These complications and arguments are enough to put some people off religion entirely and to call into question any belief in the supernatural or the divine.

But the question must be asked, perhaps especially today: what if it is *true*? What if the simple fact that I mentioned, the core reason for our celebration today and the central creedal proposition of the Christian faith is, quite simply, true? What would that mean for the world? How embarrassing for the Church that has not been faithful to that world-changing witness for the last 20 centuries. But how close-minded and prejudiced also would those persons be who ridicule others for their faith in something that gives hope and faith to the world.

For whatever reason you have come here today, join in our family celebration. We affirm today that Jesus Christ, the Son of God who died for us on the Cross, has been raised from the dead and nothing and none of us will ever be the same again. Christ is risen!