

## When we are traumatized, Jesus is still with us

There is a story of a woman who got a budgie.

One day she decided to clean the budgie cage,  
and thought it might be easier if she just stuck the vacuum in the doorway  
and suck up all the dropping on the floor of the cage.

You guessed in—in a moment the budgie was sucked up,  
pulled through the vacuum hose and deposited in the dusty vacuum bag.

The women turned the vacuum off, ripped open the bag,  
and saw the bird, alive but completely covered in dust.

So she then raced to the kitchen sink and held the bird under the tap to rinse off the dust.  
Needless to say the bird was not used to full scale water baths and was shivering with cold.

So the woman blasted the bird with her hair dryer.

Thankfully the bird warmed up and she deposited him back in its cage.

Needless to say it didn't sing as much as it used to prior to its ordeal.

And you can't really blame the bird. It had been traumatized.

For years it sat on its perch singing away,  
then all of the sudden it is sucked down a long dark tunnel, deposited in a dusty bag. H  
held under running water, and blown with a hot dry wind.

It didn't know what hit it. No wonder it was traumatized.

Now think of the disciples.

They had walked with Jesus for three years. They had seen him perform miracles.  
Watched him heal people. Feed the hungry. Create wine from water.  
They had come to believe that he was the Christ...and that he could do anything.

Then in a matter of hours, he was arrested. Found guilty of trumped up charges.  
Whipped and crucified, and left to die on a cross.

Needless to say they were traumatized.

And to top it all off, some women came to them and said they had seen the risen Lord.

And now they were locked in a room, and the risen Lord came into their midst.

In Luke's version the disciples were terrified.

Terrified, but terrified of what.

Terrified that he would give them supreme heck, for not staying with him in his ordeal.  
Terrified that he was going to haunt them for all eternity for abandoning him.  
Terrified that the Romans would come for them next,  
in their attempt to stamp out this new movement.

In their befuddled state what does Jesus say to them?

He says, "Peace be with you."

I mean if it were me. I would be yelling and screaming at the disciples for not sticking by me.

For being more concerned with their own skins than they were with mine.

For forgetting everything that I had told them.

But not Jesus. Jesus simply said, "Peace be with you."

And what is more he breathed on them and gave them the Holy Spirit.

Now I need to make a footnote.

We all know John writes on multiple levels at the same time.

If you follow the chronology of John.

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark,

Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb.

And we know that story, she ran to tell the disciples,

Peter and the other disciple had seen the empty tomb

and now it was evening and they were all locked in a room

huddling in fear of what would happen to them.

Keep in mind that all this happened in one day...the first day of the week.

Remember what I said last week on Easter Sunday morning.

Think back, what did God say, on the first day of the first week, in Genesis...

“Let there be light.”

Initially all the characters in the gospel were in the dark.

But in time they were all transformed into the light.

What was also happening on the first day of the first week, even before God said, “Let there be light.

We heard it during the Easter Vigil. Let me remind you,

“the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep,  
while the spirit of God swept over the face of the waters.”

The Holy Spirit of God hovered over the waters.

On this first day, of this second week,

when the disciples were climbing out of the darkness they were given that same Holy Spirit.

Not as a punishment. But as an aid for strength, wisdom, knowledge, understanding...  
not just for themselves; but so that they could go out and proclaim the “Good News.”

Hold that thought for a moment.

There is no question that our Church is being traumatized today.

The press has hammered us for the sexual abuse that has taken place in the past.

We have been branded as demons for what happened in the Residential schools—  
and rightly so--the Church has not acted in a Christian way in the past.

If Jesus were to appear today what would he say? (pause)

What did he say to the disciples when they abandoned him, and his teaching?

What did he say to anyone who abandoned him, and his teaching?

“Peace be with you.”

And instead of coming down hard on them,

he breathed on them the Holy Spirit--the same Holy Spirit that was present at creation.

I believe he would do the same today.

Now I have to be clear here, Jesus forgave his disciples, offered them his peace  
and gave them the Holy Spirit for strength, wisdom, knowledge, understanding,  
to continue his mission.

But...there is always a but...he didn't change the world around them.

They still had enemies.

There were still the hungry, thirsty, sick and imprisoned.

In short the world was still a mess.

But he promised to be with them until the end of time.

And for Peter, James and John and the rest of the disciples that was enough.

They went from 11 scared young men—to bold leaders—missionaries—  
who were not afraid to go among the wolves and proclaim the truth.

And what did they get for their efforts? Not a cushy life.

Remember what St. Paul experienced: countless floggings, lashes, beaten with rods,  
stoning, shipwrecks, danger from rivers and bandits, toil and hardship,  
not to mention hunger, thirst, cold and nakedness.

All of the disciples experienced a martyr's death.

I mean what sort of rally cry is that. Any sane person would run in the opposite direction.

Except that the Good News also includes: Resurrection,  
a Peace that can only come from God, eternal life. A heart filled with love.

As bad as things might seem, the rewards far outweigh the consequences.

So where does that leave us? I don't know of anyone who has gone through life unscathed.

We have all experienced trauma...some are still experiencing trauma.

To all who have experienced trauma, or are still experiencing trauma,

I would ask you to remember the second reading from the Book of Revelation.

The Book of Revelation was written for a community that was experiencing severe persecution,

They were experiencing severe trauma

The message of the Book of Revelation is "God wins."

That no matter how bad things appear, God wins."

I can only tell you that eternal life does not begin when we die.

Jesus promised to be with us until the end of time.

I can only say, "Peace be with you."

I can only remind you of your baptisms and confirmation where you received the Holy Spirit—

the same Holy Spirit that was given to the disciples—

the same Holy Spirit that was present at creation—

the same Holy Spirit that gave you strength, wisdom, knowledge, understanding.

And to remember the words of Paul, "Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things,  
endures all things...and that Love never ends." "

Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe."