

The Very Rev. Cynthia Byers Walter

SEEKING THE LIVING
Homily for Easter Vigil—Lk 24:1-12
LPC, 3/30/13

In the old series *Fawlty Towers*, comedian John Cleese plays Basil Fawlty, the most inhospitable of hoteliers working in Torquay, a British seaside resort. In one episode, he meets his match in a middle-aged guest who complains about absolutely everything. When she complains about the lack of view, he asks her sarcastically what she expected to see from a Torquay hotel room – “The Sydney Opera House? The Hanging Gardens of Babylon?” Really, what did she expect?

What did you expect when you came here tonight? You must have expected something. It strikes me that the Great Vigil of Easter is the least likely church service to be stumbled upon. On a Saturday night after dark, especially in a remote location like this one, you pretty much have to be here on purpose. You must have come here tonight seeking something. What did you come seeking?

The Sydney Opera House? Obviously not. Some light and warmth to alleviate a long dark winter? Be serious – it’s March and it’s night, after all. A welcome end to a bleak season of self-denial? Maybe.

But I daresay that our journey up this hill this evening parallels the journey of the women to Jesus’ tomb on the morning of the third day, as we heard in the Gospel of Luke just now. The women were seeking Jesus. And so are we.

Of course, we come expecting to find him risen and the women were expecting to find his dead body. So the two men in dazzling clothes, presumably angels, set them straight, saying, “Why do you seek the living among the dead?” They also tell the women, if they have any doubts, to just remember what Jesus had taught them and what he had promised them.

Away they go to tell the apostles, who disbelieve. But we have believed their testimony. We have come here at least to see if they are telling truth. We come seeking the living Christ.

Are we too seeking the living among the dead?

The irony is that Jesus is indeed to be found among the dead, or at least among the apparently dead. Jesus is to be found here, in the dead of night ... here in souls deadened by too much winter, or too much deprivation, or too much worry, or too much care. Everywhere hope is snuffed and darkness seems to prevail, the living God may be found.

If you have any doubts, remember what he told you -- How he would rise again? Remember how he told you that God loves the world so much he sent the Son that all that believe in him would have eternal life? Remember how he told you he would be with you to the end of the age?

Remember this night, whenever you find yourself in the Valley of the Shadow of Death, that Jesus lives, even in the darkness of a March night, even in the darkness of a

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deadened soul. Remember the light kindled in the darkness. Remember the return of decorations to the sanctuary. Remember the joy of that first Alleluia in months.

Go ahead and seek the living Jesus wherever you happen to be, in the light or in the shadow of death. He told you he'd be there. He will be.