

Father O'Connor's Easter Sunday Homily  
31 March 2024

Acts of the Apostles 10: 34a, 37-43  
Colossians 3: 1-4 or 1 Corinthians 5: 6b-8  
John 20: 1-9

Comedian Billy Crystal tells a story on himself. He was in a coffee shop in an airport, and a woman came up to him and said, "You know, you look a lot like Billy Crystal. Has anybody ever told you that before?" "Oh, yes!" he said. "Well, you're not Billy Crystal are you?" He played along with her and said, "No, I'm not." And she said, "I didn't think so, but you should have his money!"

Mistaken identity is oftentimes quite funny. But this feast of Easter is not about mistaken identity. It's all about certain identity.

The early Christians were absolutely convinced that the Jesus who had died on the cross on Good Friday is the very same Jesus who rose from the dead on Easter Sunday morning. They were so convinced of His certain identity that they staked their own lives upon it.

In those early days of the Church, some of the authorities didn't know what to make of this, so they rounded up many of the new Christians and put them in jail. Funny thing – while the new Christians were in jail, some of their cell mates came to believe in Jesus as well. Even some of the jailers came to believe in Him.

That faith of those early believers has come down to us. It is the same Jesus in whom we believe.

I want to welcome members of our Saint Joseph and Nativity Parishes to this Easter Sunday Mass. And all of you who are joining us from other parishes and churches. We're glad to have you!

I also want to offer a special welcome to anyone who may be looking for a church family to belong to. We'd be glad to have you as part of our St. Joseph and Nativity Parish Families!

And I also want to offer a very personal word of welcome to anyone here today who hasn't been to church in a while. I am glad that you are here. We've missed you. Our family is not complete without you. So welcome to everyone as we celebrate the Feast of Our Lord's Resurrection.

There was a door-to-door salesman who was having some rotten

luck. He would knock at door after door, and he would hear, “No, No, No.” He went to a woman’s house every single day, and every day she told him, “No, No, No” until one day she couldn’t take it anymore. So she bought something, thinking that would get rid of him. But he was back the very next day. She said, “I just bought something from you yesterday. Why are you here again today?” He said to her, “Well now you’re my regular customer!”

The early Christians took the message of Jesus Christ – that He had died and is now risen – and they knocked at the door of heart after heart. Many times they heard, “No, No, No.” But they also heard, “Yes, Yes, Yes. I believe.”

Many of these believers even died as martyrs. And faithful Christians throughout the ages have passed on that faith from generation to generation: that the Jesus who had died on the cross on Good Friday is the very same Jesus who rose from the dead on Easter Sunday morning.

One of the wonderful messages that our merciful Jesus gives is that we can always begin again. He is “the Lord of the fresh start.”

There was a man who lived in a small town and he drank heavily for years. He had brought shame and hardship to his family. With the help of God and with the help of others he embraced a life of sobriety. He left his drinking buddies and gave his life over to Christ. But sometimes they would just show up to taunt him.

One of them asked: “Do you really believe that Jesus changed water into wine at that wedding feast in Cana?” The man responded, “I wasn’t there, but if that’s what the Bible says, I believe it. But I can tell you this: in my own house Jesus has changed booze into groceries and clothing for my family. Isn’t that at least as great a miracle?”

Well, isn’t it? There are miracles that take place all around us because of Jesus. Sometimes we miss them, but He asks us to open our eyes wide and be aware of His presence.

There was a woman who said to her insurance agent, “You know, I’ve got to quit paying on this policy. Money has really gotten tight since my husband died two years ago.”

The agent looked at the policy. She was entitled to several hundred thousand dollars from her husband’s life insurance policy. She was already very wealthy but she hadn’t even realized it until then.

We are wealthy in God’s grace and God’s blessings, but sometimes we don’t realize how blessed we are. We stand in a long line of believers in

Jesus Christ. It is not mistaken identity. They believed and so do we that the Jesus who died on Calvary for our sins is the same Jesus who rose on Easter Sunday that we might have eternal life. And we stake our lives and our way of life on this.

I will leave you today with a stanza from a hymn written by Bill and Gloria Gaither:

Because He lives, I can face tomorrow.  
Because He lives, all fear is gone.  
Because I know He holds the future,  
And life is worth the living just because He lives.

Happy Easter, everyone!