

Easter Sunday

The women at the tomb are conflicted. “They hurried away from the tomb, half-overjoyed, half-fearful,” we are told. The conflict they feel within themselves is a result of the conflicting message which they have heard. “He is not here,” the angel tells them. But then he adds: “he now goes ahead of you to Galilee, where you will see him.”

In a sense the conflict which the women felt on that first Easter morning is still with us. Jesus is not here among us because he has passed from this world to the next world. On the other hand he is here with us because he has gone before us, not to Galilee but to a new kind of existence which is not limited by time and space and therefore allows him to be with us in a new way, a more spiritual way, a way which we because of temporal-spatial limits can miss, although our missing it does not make it less real. We call this his presence among us in and through his Holy Spirit which he breathes upon us continually and which we commemorate liturgically on the feast of Pentecost.

But there are also other ways in which Jesus is still present to us in time and space, although it is a veiled kind of presence, a presence

in and through others. Let me mention some of these. The one most impressed on our Catholic hearts is his presence in the bread and wine of the Eucharist. Each time we celebrate the Mass we are placed in contact with Jesus in this visible, tangible way. It is an astonishing belief, that the Lord Jesus continues down the centuries to offer himself to us in the bread and wine of the Eucharist. For two thousand years our church has lived on the Lord's daily Eucharistic bread.

The second visible and spatial presence of the Lord is in other people, first of all in our fellow church members, then in the members of other Christian churches, and then in all people of the world. Why is Christ present even in people who are not Christian, not even believers? Because when God became a man in Jesus, all human beings became Jesus' brothers and sisters precisely because he and they are members of the same human family.

The consequence of this presence of the Lord in every single human being is the good works which the Church has performed down through the ages. We are to love one another as we love Christ. Let us try to do that in our lives, first with our families and friends, then with our religious community, the Catholic Church, and then with everyone else.

There is much work to be done in our world. Our own country needs work. Look at the evil we as a nation have done in the past five years, engaging in an immoral war and torturing our prisoners. Four thousand of our children have died. How many Iraqis, I don't know. But two million have been forced from their homes and country. This is not good. This is not the work of Christ in the world.

Brothers and sisters, Christ is risen, he is not here. But he is here in the Eucharist, in our church, and in our world. Let us seek him and serve him in all his many presences among us.