


Connect!

Uniting Word & World



For Sunday, April 19, 2015

We Do Believe, Alleluia

This Sunday's Scripture Readings

3rd Sunday of Easter

<http://new.usccb.org/bible/readings/041915.cfm>

Acts 3:13-15, 17-19

1 John 2:1-5a

Luke 24:35-48



Do we *really* believe in the Resurrection? Jesus' resurrection? Our own? During the past three weeks I've traveled in India and am currently in Uganda, Africa. In India, our tour group boarded a wooden boat at dusk and shoved out into the Ganges River. It was Tuesday of Holy Week, the evening of the Chrism Mass in my diocese back home. Our group of Americans was quiet as the guide explained the customs surrounding the death of a Hindu. Many of the elderly in India move to Varanasi so that they can be close to the Ganges at their time of death. If they are cremated there, they are guaranteed a happy afterlife.

As we motored up the river, we came to the area of cremation. [Ghats \(steps\)](#) went upward from the river. Fires burned on intermittent platforms. At that moment, five bodies were being burned. The chief mourner, wrapped in white cloth, with head shaved, ignited the sixty pounds of wood beneath and above the body. He had come from the top of the *ghat* where the eternal fire burned, down to the

pyre where his loved one lay. After igniting it, the burning lasted about three hours. A sobering sight.

Three hours. The traditional time that Jesus hung upon the cross. It was Holy Week. My thoughts turned to Good Friday.

Three hours led to three days. In that interim, I moved from India to Uganda, Africa. My travel partner and I arrived at [Stella Maris College for Girls](#) after a five-hour ride, mostly on dirt roads churned by spring rains and hardened by the sun. There are over a thousand girls here from ages six to eighteen. On Good Friday, we spent almost five hours with them as they sang and prayed. All one thousand walked the outdoor stations, some barefooted as penance. The road was rough and rocky. This was followed immediately by the liturgical service. Every girl venerated the cross as they sang hymn after hymn from memory. There was no fidgeting or talking among themselves during those five hours. Unbelievable!

That five hours turned into another three hours the next night. The Easter Vigil. A thousand candles caught the light from the new fire atop the Easter candle. ALLELUIA! Sung in full voice with drums and clapping! "HE IS RISEN!" "HE IS RISEN!" The rejoicing was deafening! At the baptisms and confirmation they clapped their support! The faith and joy of these young women and their teachers was tangible! My heart rejoiced and my arms could hardly be restrained from joining their raised arms and voices of joy!

I thought of America, of my experiences of the Easter Vigil ... my wondering why we are so restrained. Then I also remembered a number of times hearing fellow Christians say, "When I'm gone, I'm gone. That's it. There is nothing else." I thought of the Hindu belief in the afterlife. I also remembered seeing a human body floating in the Ganges and wondering how that person had died and where his or her mourners were and what about his or her afterlife. In these days, in this season, we all ponder life and death and our beliefs in the afterlife.

These are perennial questions of all thinking human beings no matter what age or nation or century. Even in today's Gospel, St. Luke tells of a resurrected Jesus encouraging the disciples to touch him and to give him something to eat. Commentaries suggest that Luke was greatly aware that his Greek readers were skeptical about Jesus rising from the dead.

Are we skeptical? At the vigil here in Uganda, Father Joseph asked the universal questions, "Do you believe in Jesus Christ ... he suffered death and was buried, and rose again on the third day?" A joyous shout rose from a thousand young throats. "WE DO BELIEVE!" And he continued, "Do you look forward to the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come?" Again, the joyous shout thundered, "WE DO BELIEVE!"

Today's Gospel concludes with Jesus affirming his own history of suffering, death, and rising from that death. He then commissions his disciples to go to *all* nations as witnesses. In my experience, these young African students have witnessed to me their belief in the Resurrection. Can I catch their joy and enthusiasm? Can I bring it home halfway around the world?

In America, it seems that in our youth-oriented culture we don't want to recognize or think about death. In India it is very present. We Americans tend to keep our public grieving as short as possible, some not even having a funeral. We talk about a person "passing" rather than dying. There's an obituary and then it's time to move on. How can we celebrate resurrection when we pass over death? Maybe we need to learn from our brothers and sisters of India about death. Maybe we need to learn from our young sisters in Africa about resurrection. Maybe we need to think about, meditate on, and talk with each other about these taboo subjects.

Do I really believe in the resurrection of Jesus? Do I really believe in my future resurrection? In this springtime of new life, in this Easter season, when we hear the Resurrection stories, we need to contemplate these deep mysteries and, hopefully, shout with full voice, "I BELIEVE, ALLELUIA!"

Pat DeGroot, OblSB

PRAYER

Lord God,
you are attentive to the voice of our pleading.
Let us find in your Son
comfort in our sadness,
certainty in our doubt,
and courage to live through this hour.
Make our faith strong
through Christ our Lord,
Amen.

—*Order of Christian Funerals* © 1985, ICEL.

NOTICES

EASTER *URBI ET ORBI* MESSAGE OF POPE FRANCIS

The Vatican Television Center (CTV) broadcast the Easter Sunday Mass and *Urbi et Orbi* message of Pope Francis; the archived recordings can be found here:

<http://www.pccs.it/tj/telecasts.htm>. To view the full text of the *Urbi et Orbi* message, visit <http://www.news.va/en/news/pope-francis-urbi-et-orbi-message-2>.

CATHOLIC HOME MISSIONS APPEAL

The Catholic Home Missions Appeal takes place on the last Sunday in April, April 26, 2015 (the 4th Sunday of Easter in 2015). Resources for the national collection can be found on the USCCB website at: <http://new.usccb.org/catholic-giving/opportunities-for-giving/catholic-home-missions-appeal/collection/index.cfm>.

ICSC REGIONAL STEWARDSHIP CONFERENCE, May 2, Savannah

Mark your calendars for the annual International Catholic Stewardship Council Atlanta Province Regional Stewardship Conference, to be held on Saturday, May 2, 2015 at the DeSoto Hilton in Savannah, Georgia. If you will be attending, be sure to stop by and visit LPi. For more information visit <http://www.4LPi.com/resources/events-and-conferences>.

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