

## Easter Surprise

How many of us watched our grandchildren or children hunt for Easter eggs this morning or plan to later this afternoon? When I was a little girl and still of acceptable Easter egg-hunting age, I would re-hide my eggs. For hours and hours, my brother and I entertained ourselves by hiding and searching for the same eggs we had found for the first time earlier that morning, always with the exact same level of eagerness. We already knew what was in the eggs, and in many instances, we simply found empty eggs, for we had already consumed the candy inside, but that did not dampen our excitement. It was Easter, after all, a day for play and fun and surprises. The last hunt was just as good as the first.

I am sure that my daughter will do the same thing in a few years, and I already see signs of that childlike enthusiasm. She will request to watch a movie or read a book for the fifty-ninth time, and she never grows bored with familiar plotlines. Adults, on the other hand, grow disinterested or cynical with repetition. I cannot tell you the last time I re-read a book. and How often do we have automatic exchanges with big, deep words like “I love you” that we take for granted, barely thinking about what we are saying? We lose that enthusiasm over the years, worn out by disappointment and life’s hardships. It is worth noting that the word enthusiasm comes from the Greek *entheos*, which means “to be filled with God.”

So if this is your sixtieth or forty-first or eighty-ninth Easter, it is difficult to muster the intense joy that Christ is risen yet again. Today may feel the

same as any other Sunday, except today's lunch has way more rich food than usual.

The resurrection stories we hear today many call proofs--proofs that Jesus actually rose from the dead, proofs that Christianity's claims are true, proofs that God is all-powerful. If we view Easter as only a Proof Day, the time of the year when we get out our notebooks and pens and write down all of the reasons why the resurrection adds up, almost as if we were solving a math problem, we will get burned out on Easter. We will tire of looking at those same old facts.

But, if like Mary Magdalene, we look for how we can say "I have seen the Lord!" our last Easter here on this earth can remain as exciting and true as our very first. Mary says "I have seen the Lord" which is not simply a statement about Jesus but also about herself. She calls Jesus "Rabbouni" and views herself as a disciple. The resurrection is as much about us as it is about Jesus -- it alters our perspective on *our* identity, who God wants us to be in the world, toward what God is calling us to do.

We could be like the beloved disciple and Peter who "saw and believed." We are not sure what he believed--that Mary's initial suspicion was correct, that someone had stolen the body of Jesus--or that Jesus had conquered death. Either way, they go home quietly, with no shouts of joy or celebration. The empty tomb made no difference to them. They are worn down, frustrated by yet another unwelcome confusing turn of events that seems to happen whenever Jesus is involved.

Or we could be like Mary, and allow our tears and despair to be overcome by excitement. This Easter Day, and every day, we can give a second look to the gardener, or the stranger we see on the street, and declare “I have seen the Lord!” We can look for Jesus again and again, just as our children do for those plastic eggs, paradoxically but wonderfully knowing what we will find and being surprised and delighted all at the same time.