

Sermon, Father William J. Albinger

April 19, 2009

Easter 2 B 2009

In the Name of our One Living God; Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Today's Gospel lesson reminds me that the Risen Christ showed up to the wrong people. According to Mark, Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Salome telling them to tell his disciples and Peter that he was going ahead of them to Galilee and there they would see him. But fear got in the way and they fled and said nothing to anyone. According to Luke, it was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James and some other women who gave the good news, but to the disciples "these words seemed an idle tale, and they did not believe them." Perhaps cultural prejudice against the reliability of women as witnesses got in the way.

So here in John, Jesus goes looking for them. He finds them huddled together in fear behind a locked door in the house where the disciples had met. However, it seems that Thomas has gone missing. What I find interesting is that even though they were rightfully in fear of their lives, they have stuck together. If nothing else, they have learned the importance of community and mutual reliance.

When Jesus appears to them, his first words are: "Peace be with you." Remember, these are people who abandoned him. His first words are words of right relationship, words of forgiveness. His second words are words of call – "As the

Father has sent me, so I send you.” Tied in with that is Jesus’ corroboration of their decision to forgive others – “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.” That is the call to what became the church – to be a community of forgiveness and transcendence.

We don’t know why Thomas wasn’t with the others that evening. However, the disciples soon got an opportunity to practice what Jesus had given them. When they catch up with Thomas and tell him of what is now their core belief, Thomas denies it demanding first hand proof. However, the community sticks with Thomas because he is with them in the closed room a week later when Jesus offers to satisfy his proof needs. The response is immediate belief and proclamation.

Today we are going to enlarge the Christian community when we baptize Jim Guest. Here Donna and Jim found a community that seeks to embrace all finding that our common call to forgive and be ourselves changed far outweighs any differences. They brought their son Ryan Makana’akua to be baptized giving him the gift of belonging to a community of faith that embraces life and all the gifts of God found in all of us. Now Jim commits himself to Christ and to follow the way of Jesus and Jesus’ call to go out and carry the Father’s love and forgiveness to others. So let’s do it!