Practice Resurrection: The Revolution of Love

Before the fire was lit, before the bones rattled, before the tomb was empty, there was a journey—a sacred, communal path called the catechumenate. In the early Church, this night was the destination of a long, deliberate walk toward transformation. New believers, called catechumens, spent months—sometimes years—negating the ways of empire and embracing the way of Jesus. It was not just about creeds and doctrine; it was about dying and rising, letting go of fear and embracing love.

Tonight, as we keep vigil, we do not simply memorialize resurrection—we walk into it. We step into the ancient rhythm of light breaking into darkness, of lives made new in the waters of baptism, of the Spirit breathing life where there was once only dust. This is not a reenactment. It is a revolution.

This night unfolds in four ancient movements—light, word, water, and table. We kindle the new fire and proclaim Christ our light. We tell the sweeping story of salvation, from creation to liberation, exile to promise.

We gather around the waters of baptism—the font that is both tomb and womb—where the old self is drowned, and a new creation rises. We feast at the table where Christ is made known to us in the breaking of the bread.

At the heart of it all is baptism and our renewal of covenant—not as a quaint ritual, but as a bold, public declaration: that I-we do not belong to the powers of this world but to the risen Christ.

Baptism is the ancient thunderclap of resistance and rebirth. It is when the Beloved Community shouts, with trembling joy, that death and destruction does not get the final word.

We gather as have Christians for hundreds of years in the thick of mystery. We dare to proclaim—before the sun has risen—that Jesus has risen from the dead, that Love has conquered death.

This resurrection story does not begin at a garden tomb. It begins in a lion's den.

Daniel is a political prisoner. His only crime is loving God more than empire. He has defied an authoritarian regime not with swords, but with prayer.

They throw him into the pit, seal it with a stone, and walk away—convinced the lions will do what the system demands: devour the dissenter.

The next morning, Daniel walks out untouched. Why? Because God was in the den. **God did not save him from the den—God saved him in the den.**

Resurrection is not the absence of danger. It is the defiant presence of God in the midst of chaos.

Daniel's courage is the courage of every truth-teller who refuses to bend the knee to human idols—of extreme wealth, militaristic bullies, of unbridled power. It is the courage of spiritually grounded organizers resisting unjust systems not with violence, but with unwavering love.

Resurrection is Political Imagination

Ezekiel takes us to a valley of dry bones—a mass grave of a people who have been stripped of their land, their dignity, their humanity, their hope.

"Mortal," God says, "Can these bones live?"
And Ezekiel does not answer but rather replies: "O Lord God, you know." And that is enough.

Ezekiel prophesied as directed. The bones rise.

This is resurrection as re-membering. Resurrection as the reclaiming of our humanity.

Remember that scene in Tolkien's The Return of the King, where Aragorn calls forth the Army of the Dead: a host of forgotten warriors, bound by a broken oath, rising not to haunt but to heal—to fight for justice and reclaim the honor they had lost. Their bones become bodies. Their shame becomes purpose. They rise to make wrongs right.

So, it is with Ezekiel's bones. So, it is with us. Resurrection is not an escape plan—it is a restoration project.

In this valley of bones, we hear the whisper of another prophet—Bishop Steven Charleston:

“Dream on, even in this world of hard realities, even when the future seems to be clouded, dream on, let your imagination continue to see what might be, what could happen, what can be changed, dream on… for from your dreams a new creation will be made.”

To prophesy is to dream with open eyes. To speak what is not yet, because we believe it can be. That is the sacred defiance of resurrection.

We are not divine messengers. We do not speak for God. We are not miracle workers or moral judges.

We are prophets. We are what our prophet ancestors were: human beings living in extraordinary chaotic times.

We are members of beloved communities seeking a spiritual purpose. We are question askers. We are vision seekers. We strive to be common-sense advocates for what will be most helpful for our people.

Resurrection is Absurd Joy

The faith filled women come to the tomb.
They come with sorrow in their hands—spices, grief, trauma. Instead of a body, they find angels. Instead of a corpse, they hear a question:

“Why do you look for the living among the dead?”

It is a ridiculous moment. No one expected this. It is absurd.

Wendell Berry, farmer theologian poet whispering from the field:

“Be joyful even though you have considered all the facts. Practice resurrection.”

What if resurrection is the most radical protest of all? What if joy itself—this joy born in struggle, absurd joy—is resistance?

What if we loved creation and each other so fiercely, so foolishly, that the systems of death did not know what to do with us? What if we listened to the women?

Archbishop Desmond Tutu often conveyed a profound sense of hope and moral clarity in the face of injustice. One often quoted affirmation, during the struggle against apartheid was shared by Bishop Loya at our Reaffirmation Liturgy.

“We used to say to the apartheid government: you may have the guns, you may have all this power, but you have already lost. Come: join the winning side.”

This declaration was not merely rhetorical; it was a testament to his unwavering belief in a moral universe where justice, where resurrection ultimately prevails.

Tutu’s faith assured him that, despite the oppressive power structures of his, and our, time, the inherent dignity and rights of all people would triumph. His invitation to “join the winning side” was both a challenge to oppressors and a radical beacon of hope for the oppressed, emphasizing that love and justice are the ultimate victors.

Charleston confirms Tutu’s affirmation:
“Dream on… for by your dreaming you are not hiding from some harsh truth but giving yourself a glimpse of the alternative… a star to see in the night… an affirmation of possibilities, a defiance of diminished life, a vision sacred and healing.”

This night is a Revolution of Love

Daniel stood in the den and prayed. Ezekiel stood in the graveyard and preached. The women stood in the tomb and proclaimed the Lord is Risen indeed. Berry and Charleston guide us with what to do with it all:

“Every day, do something that won’t compute… Practice resurrection.”

“Dream on… for from your dreams a new creation will be made.”

My friends, resurrection is not a past-tense event. It is a present-tense uprising. It is so much more than a check box to remember what Jesus did—it is our covenant to practice as the Body of Christ.

When we march for justice.
When we sing in the ruins of our broken world.
When we love those that seem impossible to love.
When we make good trouble.

When we break bread together at this table.

When Jesus says, **"Do this to remember me,"** he is not suggesting we need only recall the past, but rather we proclaim that resurrection is real in this moment. This is *anam-nesis*—holy remembering that makes Christ present here and now.

May we lean into the **Paschal Mystery**—Christ has died, Christ is Risen, Christ will come again.... a new kind of liberation. God delivered Israel from slavery in Egypt, Christ delivers us from the powers of empire, sin and death. The God of Exodus proclaims Let my people go, The God of the Paschal Mystery proclaims, Let all Creation Rise.

When we distribute food at FNK and Casa Maria, when we proclaim that Black lives matter, that Palestine must be freed, that LGBTQ+ Queer lives are sacred, that the poor are blessed, that immigrants are welcomed and supported, that creation is our holy mother, that the oppressed are beloved—we are practicing resurrection.
This Holy night, listen deeply to the sacred stories remembered for us by our ancestors:

Be like Daniel. Stand up in frightening places.
Be like Ezekiel. Speak breath to the dry bones in our lives.
Be like the women at the tomb. Preach the absurd.
Be like Berry. Love someone who is difficult to love
Be like Charleston. Dream on.

Practice resurrection.
Proclaim the Way of Love.
And never stop rising.
Alleluia. Alleluia. Alleluia.

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