

3 Easter B

April 18, 2021

St. Patrick

These are the last words of the Risen Jesus in St. Luke's Gospel: **Thus it is written, that the Christ is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day...You are witnesses of these things.**"

That word "witness," in Greek, is *martyres*. It's how we get the word "martyr." In the Gospel, that first Easter night, Jesus ate the fish they served him. He still had the marks of the wounds.

Oh, I tell you: If *I* had also been there, if *you* had been there and seen the Risen Jesus, we'd all be terrific witnesses! We would live up to that word for "witness," *martyres*. We might even be bold enough to lay down our lives.

But, I haven't seen the Risen Christ. Nor have you. And it's been twenty centuries.

St. Luke's Gospel was written some fifty years after Jesus was raised from the dead. Those Christians then, as we today, had never seen the Risen Jesus eat the fish served him. They had never seen the marks of his wounds.

How could they, then, be strong witnesses, *martyres*, of the Risen Jesus if they had never seen him? Yes, it's the same with us.

About a month ago, on a windy day of early spring, my three siblings and I talked about how our Dad would make homemade kites—using his own glue, and carefully constructing the kite by hand. Some of you have heard the story before. Dad would use unbreakable string, and the kite would go so far up into the sky. Dad would have each of us write a prayer on a small piece of paper. He'd cut with a scissor the paper and slip it on the string, taping over the cut in the paper. Slowly we'd see our prayer sheets go way up into the sky!

You'd have to hold onto with both hands the stick with the roll of string. Once, when I was about ten and my brother five-years-old, Dad gave off the stick with the roll of string to my brother Lee for the first time. With a determined face Lee held onto the roll of string. Our kite went so far up in the sky that a cloud covered it, and I shouted out, teasing my brother, "See, Lee, you've lost the kite. We can't see it up there in the sky. It's gone." My brother, without looking at me but

focused up to the sky, answered, “Oh, the kite’s there. I can feel the tug on the string.”

Friends: Last Sunday we heard the Risen Jesus reply to Thomas who had fingered his open wounds—“**Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed.**” True, we haven’t seen him, but haven’t you—*we*—felt the tug deep within us—the tug of the one whom we know as the Risen Jesus? I have, and those tugs sustain me even when there’s nothing but doubts and fears that jab at me. That’s why we’re called to stay together as “church”—in order to hold up one another during those times some of us don’t experience the tug within, but only silence, emptiness.

I know that tug deep within, and I rejoice in that living presence of the Risen Jesus. We don’t have to send our prayers up the kite string. No, we need only to remember the promise made when each of us was baptized—as we do in our sprinkling rite throughout Easter—and call out, again and again, “***Come, Holy Spirit!***”

“**You are witnesses of these things,**” so the Risen Christ charges us, empowered by his Spirit. Clarence Jordan was a farmer in the South who, in the grace of the Gospel, gathered an interracial community that showed their witness of the Risen Jesus. He was instrumental in the founding of “Habitat for Humanity” and died in 1969. He once said this: “The proof that God raised Jesus from the dead is not the empty tomb, but the full hearts of transformed disciples. The persuasive evidence that Jesus lives now is not an empty grave, but a spirit-filled church. Not a rolled-away stone, but a carried-away”—St. Patrick’s (1). Then, *we’ll* be true witnesses.

(1) Quoted (adapted) from Clarence Jordan, The Substance of Faith and Other Cotton Patch Sermons, in Give Us This Day—April 2018 (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2018), pg. 165.

General Intercessions

April 18, 2021

Third Sunday of Easter B

Sing in the hearts of all who have been baptized, that the Holy Spirit might boldly empower us as Jesus' disciples and witnesses; we pray to you, O Lord—

Fortify our St. Patrick Community, that we might embrace diversity and engage the abundance of your spiritual gifts; we pray to you, O Lord—

Strengthen health-care workers and those who sacrifice themselves for the well-being of others, especially in this time of crisis; we pray to you, O Lord—

End the violence within our nation; heal the angers that divide us; and, unite us to bring about “liberty and justice for all”; we pray to you, O Lord—

Renew life for those who are homeless, jobless, or weary; we pray to you, O Lord—

Raise up in the power of the Risen Jesus all who have died with hope, especially Lucinda Lee, a 100-year-old parishioner who died this morning; we pray to you, O Lord—

