

Easter Vigil

We are buried with Jesus by baptism.
We are raised with him in newness of life.

“His Journey is our Journey”

Today is a Christian holiday! It is the first celebration of Easter when we rejoice in our spiritual birthday. Today we are reborn. We rise with Jesus Christ out of our grave where like a seed that had no earth, no water and no sunlight there was is no chance for growth – only death.

His journey is our journey. It is our journey because we made a choice to accept the gift of life freely given by Jesus Christ. It is our journey because we also accepted that his death is the only way for us to finish and receive that gift of life. This life applies only to those who are baptized and no other. We who are baptized into Christ now enjoy his new life!

St. Paul does a great job summing up this journey with Jesus in five phrases in the letter to the Roman Church:

We are –	Buried with him
	United with him
	Crucified with him
We -	Died with him
	Live with him

What is Paul’s message?

1) There is nothing that we did or could do without him. Jesus went through life very alone except for God. We go through this life with him: from diapers to the grave to eternal life. By our baptism we share everything with him.

2) From now on we are different – did you notice you are different from other people? Jesus was different after death and his resurrection. Why?
He was set free from what happened in his past life. He was done with it. He was finished.

He died to sin. He lives to God.

When you are dead a sick body no longer can plague you. You're free.

Being dead to the plague means it can't hurt you anymore.

So Paul says to Christians: you're dead to temptation and the past. It can't control you anymore or hurt you. Now start living before a living God. You are alive to God so live that way!

So why do we live as if Jesus died after the resurrection? Where in the Bible does it say that? So why do Christians live that way? Why do they live defeated in the face of temptation and settle for mediocrity? St. Paul tells Christians they are too often weighed down by this dead body of shame until it is surgically removed. The past can be haunting. This twin attached at the hip is so heavy one can't sleep, or pray or love. Don't be afraid - let go – that past is dead and it can't hurt you, says Paul.

We were set free from all of that. We were pardoned from the curse of being failures. What a wonderful feeling it is to know you are declared innocent and now can live in that innocence before God.

Recently I was in a car accident on Hwy 113 in Madison driving in our last major snowstorm just four miles from home. I was one of two cars hit traveling on a green light by a full size van. Fortunately no one was hurt. The surprise came later when I was presented with a summons to appear in court by the owner of the first vehicle that was hit. How was I at fault? I called a lawyer friend and she advised me to send a letter to the judge to make my case. I did that.

Two weeks before the court hearing I called my insurance company to advise them. Three days before the scheduled hearing I called my insurance company again and they hired a lawyer for me. I was ready to go to court to defend my innocence. I knew I was right. But it was not until I was called by my insurance company that day that I discovered that I was

FALSELY NAMED IN THE LAWSUIT BY A CLERICAL ERROR.

I was greatly relieved. The burden of a lawsuit before Holy Week was lifted. I was officially declared "Innocent." Not until after I was told and by mail received it in writing was I able to live knowing I was truly innocent as far as the court was concerned. I celebrated!

This day is a holiday and we are told to live into this day fully. We are declared "innocent" by God by virtue of our baptism. Having heard it time and again we must choose each day to be alive to God and dead to our past. We are innocent and made clean by the blood of Jesus Christ.

I am convinced we need to change the liturgy and we are going to do just that to reflect this life we live. When we hear, "Alleluia! Christ is Risen!" the typical response is "He is Risen indeed! Alleluia!" but the response that truly honors Jesus and his sacrifice is "I am risen with Christ!" "Allelluia!"

And so Dear Bishop, sorry to tell you but the 1979 Prayer Book has just been revised and we want you to know that it started in Trinity Episcopal Church first! And we want the credit and a discount on our yearly assessment.

Allelluia! Christ is Risen! I am risen with Christ! Allelluia!