

Alleluia Christ is risen. Happy Easter! I imagine many have joined an encore in the past few weeks saying: “when things get back to normal.” And as I reflect on that current sentiment I believe it is very short sighted.

First, if we are saying, “I will be **happy** when the Stay-in-Place is lifted,” we are consigning ourselves to a miserable few weeks. Why post-pone our happiness? From my experience we can never be happy tomorrow, we can only be happy right now. Why not wait **in happiness** for this to pass?

I recall one of professors, teaching me: “Martin, you think you will be happy when you get what you want. Happiness comes from giving up wanting.” I will be eternally grateful to Dr. Jones for teaching me the art of happiness. Another teacher said, the secret to happiness is low expectations. And I have said that to many a Saint Aidan’s member.

And the giving up of wanting, the self-surrender, is at the heart of what must die if we are to experience the joy of resurrection, of new life and inner freedom.

Second, I believe the pandemic has given many a wonderful opportunity and time to reflect on our lives. Can we imagine many saying, as they contemplate going back to work, “I don’t want to go back to that job, or I don’t want to go back to that way of living.

In John’s story of the resurrection, he tells Mary not to cling to him, not to cling to that old way of knowing the earthly Jesus. I believe the same is true for us. Don’t cling to our old way of being and doing in the world. Don’t go back to normal.

Now if normal was great for us and the world we lived in then I would say, just hang in there and wait for that normal to be resuscitated. However, if normal wasn’t great for us and the world we lived in, then the task is to ponder what needs to die. What part of that normal life do we need to surrender. We remember that Jesus actually died. There is no resurrection without death. Jesus wasn’t dormant in the tomb, or in need of resuscitation, Jesus died. Jesus needed resurrection.

If we simply endure our forced isolation and then go back to the way things were, we will have experienced reincarnation. Contrary to trivial understandings of reincarnation, the followers of the Buddhist way see reincarnation as a curse. It is the endless cycles of perpetuating misery. The outer form may change but the inner life remains miserable.

We see it in miserable people endlessly getting divorced and remarried, finding a new partner, and then having that fail too, repeating the pattern of misery

as they reincarnate their miserable life over and over again. The solution for such suffering was not reincarnation but enlightenment.

For us Christians, the solution is resurrection. Both enlightenment and resurrection require death, and perhaps some time in the tomb, a period of darkness, of isolation. It may also require unbinding, as in Jesus comments to Lazarus' friends: "unbind him and let him go".

I w-o-n-d-e-r how many will come out of the tomb of social isolation, and social distancing, only to remain bound up in resentment or grief or the cultural and social binds of racism and poverty. We have much work to do if we want to be agents of transformation in our church and our society and not agents of reincarnation and the status quo.

Here at Saint Aidan's, Virginia Beach, where I have been serving since September as Transitional Interim Rector, I am inviting all of us into fifty days of Easter. Lent got very disrupted, and I believe now that we have a better handle on the technology of working online, we have an opportunity to engage in some of the self-reflection and discovery that these times offer and could truly lead to resurrection and new life. I wish us all the many blessings of a joyous Fifty days of Easter. In the Name of God, Creating Presence, Redeeming Christ, and life-giving and inspiring Spirit. AMEN.