

Easter Vigil 2018

So they went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.^[a]

It's good to be here tonight. As it was yesterday and the night before. It's good to be here not just because of the beautiful music, beautiful readings, beautiful liturgical décor, beautiful people, Ayaka, Christopher, Joshua, Jen, Janet, Kim, Miles and Pietro who soon will be baptized. It's good to be here to hear the final words of Mark's Gospel. If you had gone to any other Catholic church, the Gospel would have ended with "there you will see him as he told you". The last line of the Gospel where Mark leaves the listener "hanging" would not be heard. Claire's "not yet" from yesterday would not be heard. In Catholic churches tonight you would not hear the women's reactions, the women's feelings about this Jesus event. (Surprising?)

And what were these women's words on the way? What were the voices of Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Salome saying? **Did you see what I saw? Did you hear what I heard? How can this be? Is this for real or only an illusion?**

Is this for real or only any illusion? This week began for me with an "illusion". I received a Youtube video of a woman "dancing" on thin air. She seemed to be levitating. Only holding on to a cane, she seemed to have the ability to "suspend" herself between heaven and earth, defying the laws of gravity. Fascinating! Until someone posted an explanation of "how" the illusion is created. No, this was not "for real". Just a very effective illusion.

But this woman's dance made me think of another woman named Clare. I met her years ago in Kingston Jamaica. Clare had lost a leg in an accident and spent most time in her wheel chair. But then Clare would hop up out of her chair and begin to dance, with only one foot on the ground, in perfect balance, she would jump off that one foot, and twist and turn, and

praise the God who gave her “one foot and a leg to stand on”, and dance on and on. This, my friends, was no “illusion”. Clare was for real. And what a privilege it would be to “wash” Clare’s beautiful foot on Holy Thursday. How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring glad tidings!

Is tonight “for real or just an illusion”? Is all this beauty a deception, covering up the real gritty, dirty, messy, “stuff”, the injustice, the suffering, the brokenness of our world, the cruelty of life. Remember the story is first about human cruelty: an innocent man “hanging” on a tree, that man they call Jesus somehow embracing all human suffering? But as another Claire said yesterday, this Jesus is not left “hanging” on the tree. And neither are we left hanging. We’re here tonight because we dare to believe the unthinkable. Out of our terror of this world and our amazement at its beauty, we can not keep silent. We dare to speak words of comfort, consolation, hope and new life.

My week began with the illusion of a “levitating woman” and a very real memory of a dancing Clare. And then we received word of the death of another dancer. Marian Lizzio, Xavier parishioner, dancer, member of the Xavier Company, so full of life and love and laughter finally surrendered her fragile, vulnerable body that was once so full of life and energy to the God in whom she placed her trust. Marian was no illusion. She was so very real for those who knew her and loved her.

But she was not the only Xavier parishioner who died recently. Only by the grace of God did I hear about the death of Patricia O’Grady. I only learned Patricia’s name yesterday. I only knew her as the woman who was stooped over, who must have suffered terribly with her physical condition, not being able to straighten herself. Whenever I saw her I wished that Jesus were around to heal her as he did the woman in the gospel. Of course Jesus was around but it was my lack of faith not seeing him. And it was my own terror and amazement at what life was like for Patricia that kept me from speaking with her. And oh how I wish I had! Through the grace of God and MaryJo Pane, I read Patricia’s obit. This woman who gave the illusion of

someone carrying so much pain, for 50 years had been an off Broadway actress, working with a host of noted actors and actresses and studying dance at the Joffrey Ballet and with Ana Sokolow. The real Patricia, the one whom we never saw was a stunningly beautiful actress and dancer. And in the obit, it said there were no funeral services. Well, friends, tonight is for Patricia. This is her Mass of Resurrection. And I can only think that Marian and Patricia are dancing with Jesus in God's kingdom. Both with their transfigured and restored bodies and beauty.

And it is "very good" to be here because God is Very Good.