

**Sermon preached at the Church of the Holy Trinity, Philadelphia
Sunday April 22nd 2007
by Laura Esposito, Seminarian
"Joy in God's Creation"**

We begin in the name of our God who created the earth for us, suffered death and rose again for us, and who remains with us in times of sadness and gladness. Amen.

Sometimes we feel that God has hid God's face from us and has let bad things happen. This week has been particularly awful due to the horrible, tragic events of the shootings at Virginia Tech. Thirty three lives have been taken from this planet, from loving families, and communities. People are left shaken and wondering where God has gone. Many local areas have been flooded and damaged by the recent bad weather. It has been a rough week.

Today the psalmist talks of God hiding God's face and feeling dismayed. In another point the psalmist cries out, "Hear, O Lord, and be gracious to me! O Lord, be my helper!" Then we see poor Peter, he just wants to go fishing, back to what he knows he did before he got up one day and followed this man named Jesus. And this itinerant preacher, this carpenter can't even catch any fish and asks Peter for some. But Peter has nothing to show for fishing all night.

Fortunately, Jesus tells Peter to try fishing on the other side of the boat. He gets fish and Jesus has the cooking fire ready and some bread. Peter sees new light just as Paul gets his sight restored. The Psalmist is praying to God because God has restored him from a serious illness. And Just in case we have missed the point we are reminded that our weeping from feeling God's wrath or from feeling cut off from God only lasts a night because joy comes in the morning. Suffering is not long term, God does not intend for God's people to be in the dark and God will always send us the light of morning.

Even in the darkness of our nights, amidst the world's suffering Jesus, the light of the world is right there. Christ was and is among the students, faculty, and staff on the campus of Virginia Tech and in our local community. Christ is among those affected by the

floods and wind damage that occurred earlier this past week. Christ is here suffering along with us, walking with those that try to alleviate suffering, and in our friends. Christ is present in each and every one of us. The other night on ABC World News students at Virginia Tech were starting to smile again and were working toward resuming life as normal. The night's weeping is giving way to the joy of the morning.

The joy of the morning is Christ! God has conquered death so that we may have eternal life with God. God sent us his one and only son to dwell among us and die for us. God hears our cries and carries us out of the depths of Sheol, out of life's rough spots. God loves us. This beautiful world that we live in has been created for us. God and creation are so magnificent that all of heaven and the creatures on earth praise God saying, "To the one seated on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!" God has done all this for us so it is no wonder that all heaven and all creatures on earth sing praises to God. Night is passing a way and joy comes to us this morning through the Risen Christ. Isn't that wonderful news?!

We have the privilege of bearing all this good news to the world. We have the privilege of bearing the light of the world to the world by proclaiming the Good News of Christ and God's love for us. I realize that this statement makes Episcopalians and Lutherans very uncomfortable. I am not saying that we have to stand on a street corner with a bull horn or go knocking on doors, or hand out tracts. We bear this good news and bear Christ to our neighbor in all that we do.

We already do this when we help our brothers and sisters at Church of the Crucifixion by helping with much needed renovations, when we open up our worship space for people to come in and pray every day. When we host musicians and use our space for concerts that are open to everyone. When we have our cook offs. When we pray for people, especially the victims, friends, and loved ones of the Virginia Tech family.

Jesus asks Peter if he loves him and instructs him to feed the lambs and tend the sheep. He starts by asking Peter if he loves him and instructs Peter to take care of the lambs and sheep. We too, as followers of Jesus, are called to care for all of God's creation. We are

called by Christ to do this out of our love for him. We do a lot of things already to care for people as I've already mentioned. Today we hear of Jesus appearing to Paul in a flash of light, helping the disciples catch fish to eat, of the joys of morning light, and of all of heaven and creatures praising the living God our thoughts are turned toward the earth.

God turns our thoughts towards the earth, God's creation. And so I share this Hopi Prayer that has been constantly going through my head these past few days.

"Do not stand at my grave and weep
I am not there I do not sleep.

I am a thousand winds that blow,
I am the diamond glint in the snow,

I am the sunlight on ripened grain,
I am the gentle summer rain.

When you wake in the morning hush,
I am the swift, uplifting rush
Of quiet birds in circling flight.
I am the soft starlight at night.

Do not stand at my grave and cry.
I am not there. I did not die."

Being Earth Day we have guidance on how to appreciate and care for the earth. Today we join with brothers and sisters all over this country and with brothers and sisters in the past like St. Francis of Assisi to appreciate, promote and work towards better care of this beautiful planet that God has given to us to take care of and dwell. Today we stop and really focus on how much the pollution we all generate affects all of us, especially the poor all over the world who lack the resources to adapt to the changing environment and lack filters to clean impure water. Because we love Christ we bear Christ to these people and to the entire planet by taking time each day to care for the environment.

If you are on this Church's mailing list then you should have received an environmental pledge card in the mail this week. You can fight pollution and bear Christ to the world by doing simple things like not running the water while you are brushing your teeth

or keeping the tires on your car fully inflated. You can help bear the light of the World, the light of morning by helping to fight the smog and such that can prevent us from seeing and being comforted by God's wonderful creation. We are people of the morning and out of joy we share it with the world.

Let us pray:

You have given us the earth, the sky and the seas.
Show us the way to care for the earth, not just for today,
but for ages to come so that all the world may know your
glory. Let no plan or work of ours damage or destroy the beauty of
your creation. Send forth your spirit to direct us, and give us the
wisdom to heed it so that we may bear Christ to the world as we
care for the earth and all creation. Amen

Adapted from the closing prayer at.
<http://eriebenedictines.org/Pages/MONASTERYLIFE/backnews/earthday.html>

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