

We remember Mothers today – all of you who were born of a woman, take a moment to give thanks to that person. Our moms nourished us and cherished us as we grew in them – even when we made life very uncomfortable!

A lighthearted email from my mom tells this story:

This may come as a surprise to those of you not living in Las Vegas but there are more Catholic churches there than casinos. Not surprisingly, some worshippers at Sunday services will give casino chips rather than cash when the basket is passed. Since they get chips from so many different casinos, the churches have devised a method to collect the offerings. The churches send all their collected chips to a nearby Franciscan Monastery for sorting and then the chips are taken to the casinos of origin and cashed in.

This is done by a chip monk.

It is OK to laugh! As a matter of fact, we are supposed to be very very happy: But our joy here and now is because Jesus has risen from the dead! We celebrate these great 50 days after Easter with great jubilation and joy and vitality! To me, telling jokes is part of the fun. It keeps me lighthearted. There is also a deep, internal joy that moves within me and within all of us: He who was dead is alive. ALLELUIA!

This joy is in inverse proportion to the sorrow of Lent. We crept closer and closer to the crucifixion by examining our hearts, eating less, rethinking who we are and how much we need forgiveness. The IT happened: the Last Supper, the Passion and Crucifixion, the emptiness of one whom the disciples loved was gone! We can all identify with the loss of a loved one. The disciples lost Jesus in a horrible, violent way.

Then the electrifying news of the Resurrection hit the disciples – right between the eyes! He who was dead is alive. Jesus lives! Can you imagine how it would feel for someone you laid in a grave to be seen alive? To come to your family, while you are mourning the loss, to come behind closed doors and say: Peace to you. This is the peace of shalom that Jennifer wrote about in the newsletter. This peace is a prophetic vision of a world characterized by peace, justice, and celebration, as philosopher Arthur Holmes wrote. As a vision of the future, it means not only cessation of hostilities, but the full prosperity of a people of God living under the covenant of God's demanding care and compassion. This peace comes hand in hand with justice. Without justice, there can be no real peace, and without peace, no real justice. Only in a social world full of peace grounded in justice can there come the full expression of joy and celebration. This is the Peace of the Lord we pass to one another during our liturgy. This peace includes the certain joy we have at this Easter season: Jesus lives!

Can I get an alleluia amen??

This section of John's Gospel takes us back to the Last Supper; it is known as part of the Farewell Discourse. Farewell Discourses have been written in several places in the Bible: Jacob (Gen 49), Joshua (Josh 23-24), Moses (Dt), David (1Chron 28-29), Paul (Acts 20.17-38). Farewell Discourses follow a pattern: there is a gathering of followers or family, an announcement of imminent departure or death, a review of the person's life, the naming of a successor, prophecies, promises, blessing; final instructions; and prayer. Jesus' farewell (Jn 14 - 16) includes all of these elements.

The author of today's gospel wrote somewhere around 90-110 ce to convince people that Jesus lives. The apostles were dying off by persecution and old age. We might venture to say this: an eyewitness lived late into the first century and finally died, a big crisis for the church

which resulted in this gospel. The imminent death left its mark on the way this gospel was fashioned. The dismay of the Johannine community at the imminent death of the eyewitness corresponds to the dismay of the disciples at the imminent death of Jesus. There is a fusing of two historical events. This beloved disciple remembers what it was like to lose Jesus just as we know what it is like to lose a loved one. He tells the story of Jesus' departure in a way that will help his community. Remembering is a creative act of faith in this gospel. To remember in the Johannine sense is to remember the events in a way that helps people hear and learn divine truth, leading the listeners to deeper understanding of the events.

John wants the listeners to know
Jesus is always with them
Jesus always loves them
Jesus sends the Presence of the Holy Spirit to comfort, console, defend everyone
before the judgment of God.

How will the new believers continue the story of Jesus to the year 200 and 300 and 1500 and today? The author writes as if it is a: You Are There story.

This is what may have taken place during Jesus' last night of revelry with his closest friends; you remember them: one will deny knowing Jesus, two want to be on his right hand and his left hand united in kingly power with him, one will betray him, one will disbelieve, most will think the women who traveled with them everywhere don't have a clue. All will run away. Those friends.

In this 'You Are There' episode, Jesus and his disciples were enjoying a dinnertime conversation. Judas was sent out into the night to do what he had to do. Peter proclaimed he would follow Jesus anywhere, Thomas wanted to know where Jesus was going, Philip demanded to see the Father, and the other Judas wondered why Jesus would reveal himself to the dinner guests only and not to the whole world.

Peter is told he will deny Jesus. Thomas was told he could not go. Philip was reprimanded for not paying attention. The other Judas didn't understand that HE would reveal Christ to the world.

John desperately wanted the Jews and Gentiles choosing to believe in the Risen Christ that Jesus is the Messiah who promised what he preached: forgiveness of sins and salvation for humankind. John reminded the listeners and readers again and again that Jesus is from God, Jesus and God are one, and that as Jesus loves them, so does God. John further reminds the people gathered that Jesus will not leave the flock to be devoured, but will send the Advocate to be with them. The Advocate, the Holy Spirit, will live with them and will remind them of all the things they need to know.

John writes: keep Jesus' words. Keep Jesus' words demands a positive attitude towards the "Word;" we want to hear and obey out of love for Jesus.

Keep Jesus alive in your hearts and minds and souls with joy and celebration. These are trying, difficult times for you, but the Advocate is with you. When you come to the realization that the Father lives in Jesus and Jesus lives in you, then the second coming has happened. Instead of waiting for Jesus to return, we realize that Jesus lives – in us. In our hearts. In our souls. In our prayers and liturgy. In our daily work. This life grows in each of us – we have to nurture the life within. Cherish it. Feed it. Feel it move – even when it makes you uncomfortable.

That's God living in you and in me. God lives in us because God delights in us. You are here, and God is in you. Alleluia. Amen.