

Easter Sunday Homily
Christ Church Cathedral and St. Mark's, Louisville, Kentucky
April 12 - B Year 2009
by The Rt. Rev. Edwin F. Gulick, Jr., D.D.

My mother could not carry a tune in a bucket but that did not stop her from singing, which is why I know most of the words to most of the musicals from the 1930-40's. She liked the romantic stuff, and one of her favorites was "Getting to Know You, Getting to Know All About You." She loved those songs about falling in love and the transforming, exhilarating joy of being known and being loved.

As I read the scriptures for today I found myself pondering two texts that on the surface were unrelated, but as I pondered and prayed, I found a connection. It was mother's song "Getting to Know You" that provided the bridge. My first text is from St. Paul's first letter to the Corinthians: "He was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures." My second text is from our Gospel reading: "He is going ahead of you to Galilee." Both of these texts are about getting to know the God whose most defining self revelation is the resurrection of Jesus the crucified Messiah.

Paul claims that it is the scriptures – the Hebrew Bible – that help us get to know the God whose definitive revelation is the Resurrection of Jesus. Perhaps St. Paul would not mind too much if I used a word from my experience as an English major to articulate his insight. Wordsworth talked about an "intimation," as in "Ode on the Intimation of Immortality." For Paul it is scripture that awakens our intimation – our intimate intuition that resurrection would be the ultimate fulfilling of our hope in the God of Israel. Why might this be? We are told in scripture that God has created a beautiful multifaceted creation and it is good. And we are told that the crowning of that creation is humankind. After the creation of humankind, the Creation, which had been described as good, becomes very good. I am reminded of a potter working and finally throwing the best pot of her life – very good. Somehow we get the scriptural intimation that the God who so delights in something so very good might not want to loose from his delighted seeing something so very good, something so delightful.

Scripture tells us the story of old Abram and Sarai a.k.a. Abraham and Sarah. This God of Israel wants to be in relationship; he wants to be a husband to humankind, as the prophets tell us. God says to Abraham, "Let's get together forever. You and your offspring will be mine, and I will be yours.." This getting to know and getting to be known is beginning to feel strong – and we begin to get intimation – a "hope thought." Could it be forever? Could it be stronger than death?

And later on this God, who husbands us, is seen as liberator: the waters are divided, and the slave class and their leader with an Egyptian name make it. And the haunting memory of the Lamb's blood on door posts and the memory of the survival of our first born make us begin to hatch a "hunch in hope" that Jehovah knew how to defeat death, to rob death of its power.

And this God is later described by Isaiah as carving our names on his hands and as remembering us the way a lactating mother thinks about her baby. God remembers us like a nursing mother always remembers her nursing child. Isaiah the theologian makes us wonder. He makes us intuit. This teacher of God hatches an intimation in us that God just might remember us, even when we get swallowed up by death. Perhaps this God whose mercy is the milk – the food, the nutrient – we need. This God, engorged on mercy and memory like a nursing mother, is engorged with milk, the stuff of life. Perhaps – perhaps – perhaps our intimation is true; perhaps we will be remembered even in death!

Job blurts out, in the midst of his despair: “I know that my redeemer lives.” There is a growing scriptural intimation that as we are getting to know this God of Israel we are getting to be an intimation – a love-based, intimate, informed intuition – that the way this God loves his people is in fact stronger than death. This is why Paul says that Easter accords with scriptural intimation.

In the gospel Jesus invites the disciples to meet him in Galilee because Galilee is the place where they saw and began to believe. It is the place where he preached justice and jubilee. It is the place where the isolating realities of disease were done away through the power of his word and the power of his touch. Galilee was the place where they were called and were partnered with him in his mission. Galilee was the place where thousands were fed the bread of life, and where during a time of prayer and retreat on the top of a hill something glorious was revealed. Galilee was the place where they found that they were getting to know him and He was getting to know all about them and love and life, and hope and joy was mixing and mingling. An intimation was born that nothing would take him from them – not temple, not Rome, not death. Go to the place of our mutual intimation. I will meet you, and intimation will surrender to knowing, that the love is stronger than death, that covenant is beyond the grave, that this Lamb of God will not just protect from death but he will go into the jaws of death. In one of the most weirdly wonderful words in Paul, he will swallow it up and reveal that all of our intimations were right – our intimations were very good – and they now surrender to knowledge, to sight, to a risen Lord still bearing his wounds as *badges* of devotion and badges of his power to defeat all that robs us of intimation, that robs us of hope.

“We were getting to know this God of Easter in the scripture. We got to know Him in Galilee. Our intimation surrenders to Presence – to love larger than death, to love that holds us – the very good object of his desiring – and meets us at the place of our desperate hope and cannot and will not ever let us go because he knows us – he knows all about us – and knowing is forever. Amen