

Waking Up to the Resurrection  
April 17, 2022  
Gospel of John 20:1-18  
Fr. John

Most Christians are familiar with the Easter stories. They picture Jesus coming out of the tomb on Easter Sunday morning. It is a happy event - especially for Jesus after we hear how he was abused, tortured, and summarily crucified on Good Friday. He, therefore, subsequently proves his divinity, the story has a happy ending and then we all leave to have a wonderful Easter meal with our family and loved ones and we're all grateful to have another civic holiday on our calendar. End of story.

But wait! Where do you and I fit into all this? Are we only on the sidelines cheering Jesus on?

All during the Lenten season we have been relating the Sunday scripture readings with the 12 step recovery program adopted by Alcoholics Anonymous decades ago. They present a framework or model of a spiritual conversion process that can be applied to any of us who seek to change some aspect of our lives.

Today - Easter Sunday - coincides with the 12th of these steps which states: 'Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to others and practice these principles in all our affairs.'

A 'spiritual awakening' - Does that mean that perhaps many of us have been sleeping walking through life? We go through the motions of living but have we ever experienced a life-changing event that has changed how we see life and has impacted our attitudes and our relationships with others?

I would venture to say that if we have ever really applied the principles of the 12 steps to ourselves, we would emerge a different person - a resurrected person! We too would emerge from the tombs of whatever is holding us back from becoming the best version of ourselves as God created us to be.

Spiritual conversion like a drug or alcohol recovery program is difficult work. It demands total commitment, honesty, and a willingness to change.

To the degree that we have been faithful to these elements of conversion we are ready to celebrate Easter - otherwise it simply becomes just another holiday long weekend.

Easter and Christ's resurrection is an invitation to wake up to a new day - the day of the Risen Christ not some resuscitation of the historical Jesus. Mary Magdeline wanted the 'old Jesus' back but Jesus tells her 'do not hold on to me'. That is if as to say, we shouldn't hang on to some nostalgic notion of the resurrection as being something nice that happened to Jesus 2000 years ago.

Conversion - that process of turning around, having a change of heart is a slow and often a painstaking journey like climbing a mountain - a mountain that seems overwhelming at first glance. Yet when taken one step at a time, it is possible to overcome.

Over the years I have taken part in a number of AA birthdays - anniversaries marking years of sobriety for an individual. Such celebrations attract the gathering of others who have gone through a similar process and they know what they are commemorating. Easter may be something of that insofar as we, as a faith community renew our baptismal promises in a more solemn way and pledge to continue our journey of faith and support each other in the process. And rather than us cheering Jesus on, God is cheering **us** on and walking with us every step of the way as we ascend to that mountain top wherein Christ draws everything to himself.