

Think back and remember:

- when you got your first real haircut !
- the first day of school – for you and your parents
- when you finally became a “teenager”
- when you got your driving permit – and then drove the family car – alone

All - important times of transition – and, of course, there are more

- high school graduation and then college or work
- leaving home and creating a home of your own
- relocating to a different part of the country, perhaps a different cultural setting
- and, right in front of us, welcoming a new grandchild into the family

Today we share two of these special times

- our changed life in a post Easter / Resurrection church
- our witness to the Rite 13 liturgy, a rite of passage as our young teenagers engage in a journey to adulthood that involves changing relationships, engagement in a widening world, and assumption of more responsibility for their own decisions and actions

This is a new world for all of us. In a way, it's easier to see the change in the teenagers as they sit as a group with their parents on the right side of the church – and, after the special liturgy, move as a group to sit with their peers, other young adults - in a sense leaving childhood, and parents, behind. You know, beyond the symbol it really happens. Like a toddler taking their first steps – once they can walk, they are in control of where they will go. Scary !

What about the other change that can be there for all of us in this important Easter season – perhaps often forgotten after the quiet and reflective time of Lent and the anxiety, emotionality, insecurity, excitement, and disbelief associated with the final steps of Jesus' journey to Jerusalem. We, as seasoned Christians, realize and rejoice in the Easter Message – the Lord has Risen, Alleluia. Death has been vanquished by the risen Christ. Alleluia. Two thousand years later the truth of this message still holds true.

For the new followers of Jesus, however, Easter was a time of joy and uncertainty. HE appeared – to a small group of women, to the disciples, to others in various contexts for forty days. The disciples stuck with each other with Peter as a leader and soon gathered to worship, spread the good news, locally and “abroad”. The narrative we have listen to in Luke will continue in the Book of Acts with a description of the beginning(s) of the early church.

But – for them, and us, what comes next?.

We find some clues in the Gospels, before and at the end of the Easter story, as Jesus commands the disciples to share the good news with all creation and make disciples of all people, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. .

Early on, the disciples were questioned about their response to authority. When the high priest questioned Peter and the others about their teaching the response was, “we must obey God rather than any human authority”.

When warned not to speak or teach in the name of Jesus, Peter and John said “we cannot keep quiet about what we have seen and heard.”

The question for us then is how we, young and old, use what Jesus has shared with us, through word and example, in our daily lives. What authority do we use in making decisions that will lead to action? This is not easy and we know that many have used the perceived authority of the Church to harm others. Of late, the Episcopal and other denominations have had difficulty in applying the authority of the church to changing cultural mores. The solution, for everyone, is to pay attention; question, listen, and study; realize that the Church and God may have different agendas; seek to make things transparent. Take responsibility for your own prayer, spiritual life, and relationship with God.

Soon, we will join our new teenagers in reciting the Apostles Creed, a simpler version of what we usually say on Sunday mornings. Here is the Easter Message – Jesus Christ, God’s only Son, suffered, was crucified, died and was buried – rose again and ascended to heaven and sits at the right hand of God. And here is how we should live – to persevere in resisting evil - when we sin to repent and return to the Lord – to proclaim by word and example the Good News – to seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving our neighbor as ourself –to strive for justice and peace among all people and respect the dignity of every human being.

All of us here today are a part of this Rite-13 - and our own Christian - transition and transformation. But, rather than all of us moving over to the left side of the church to celebrate a new birth and beginning in Christ why not just live the life and talk about what happens.

Witnessing”, sharing the good news, talking about our spiritual life is often seen as a suspicious kind of behavior among Episcopalians. It’s embarrassing – but we can and should do it in some way. Some of the most meaningful times during the recent Lenten series on prayer were when we shared our own prayer lives and, at the last session, listened to friends from different faith traditions talk about what prayer meant to them in their daily lives. Each of our three visitors spoke about how important their preparation for the session had been to them in terms of reflecting on their own lives. That is something all of us can do – in the family, with co-workers, in conversation with friends. I know I am where I am today because a friend brought her Bible to work and read it during lunch. Just a simple kind of witnessing and living out the faith that was an integral part of her life.

We, and our youth, are very fortunate to be together in community where we live out these special life passages together. On the second Sunday of each month, we especially appreciate the joy and excitement of life that our younger parishioners share with us.

AMEN