

The Third Sunday of Easter and the Sacrament of Baptism for Violet Elizabeth Opong

followed by the text of the Baptismal Covenant

Readings

Acts 2:14a, 36-41

I Peter 1:17-23

Luke 24:13-35

Psalm 116

Collect

O God, whose blessed Son made himself known to his disciples in the breaking of bread: Open the eyes of our faith, that we may behold him in all his redeeming work; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Here is something the disciples discovered on the road to Emmaus: it is entirely possible to spend an entire afternoon walking with the risen Christ, feel your heart burning the whole time, and still not recognize him until he picks up the bread. This is either totally reassuring or mildly alarming, for those of us who regularly share broken bread and poured wine.

Two disciples, walking away from Jerusalem. They were done. Their friend was dead. They were going home. the way you go home from something that did not work out. You had flunked out of college. Go home. Your start-up didn't start, Go home. The relationship ended and the Ex got the apartment. Go home.

A stranger falls into step beside these losers and after hours together they do not know who he is. He has been with them all afternoon. He has explained the scriptures with an insight that made their hearts burn. And still they miss it.

Until he picks up the bread, gives thanks, and breaks it. Then they see him. Then he vanishes -- because that's how it works. That's always how it works. You do not get to stay in the ecstasy of the moment of recognition. You get to be changed by it and sent back into the world that maybe you ran away from.

The disciples looked at each other, got up that very hour, and walked seven miles back to Jerusalem in the dark. Because you can walk seven miles in the dark when you have seen what they saw.

We are here this morning to baptize Violet Elizabeth. Her parents made a decision I want to commend to you as a theological act. Her dad, Drew, left a stable white-collar job, the kind that you stay in because it's safe and predictable. He went to start a company that makes parties happen. Bouncy houses. Inflatable castles. The equipment of joy.

And while I am certain there were conversations about transitions, and I am also sure that even more than in the Biblical stories, phrases like "fiscal security" and "long-term stability" were part of that conversation, what the Opongs did is exactly what the Emmaus disciples did when evening was coming and the stranger was talking. Something in them refused to choose the safe and predictable over the inexplicable and potentially joyful that was making their hearts burn.

When parents bring an infant to the font, people sometimes wonder what the child is getting out of it. That's a fair question and our Anabaptist and evangelical cousins have a very different answer.

After all, the child cannot make promises. The child does not understand the creed. All of that is true. But the parents know something, they feel something, even if they can't say it yet:

They want this child blessed.

They want someone to say: this life is good, this child is welcomed, the universe is on her side. They want community they did not have to build from scratch.

They want a story for her that begins before she can remember it -- a certificate, a photograph at the font, a parish name in her earliest narrative.

What they want, whether they know the word or not, is sacrament. They want to hand their child to a God who is larger than their fears. And the church says in return: we see you. We will do everything in our power to support this child in the life you are beginning together.

Peter stood up on the day of Pentecost and said something almost too simple: God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified. The people were cut to the heart. What do we do? Be baptized, said Peter. Every one of you. And three thousand did -- because one man stood up and told the truth about what he had seen.

The collect this morning asks God to open the eyes of our faith, that we might behold Christ in all his redeeming work. All his redeeming work. Not just at this altar. At the kitchen table. On a seven-mile road. In an infant who does not know

yet that she is loved by more people than she can count. In parents who looked at their lives and decided they wanted to spend them making people joyful.

The disciples' hearts burned. And they walked back toward everything they thought was over.

Where do you need to walk back toward?

Amen.

The Baptismal Covenant of The Episcopal Church

Celebrant Do you believe in God the Father?

People I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

Celebrant Do you believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God?

People I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.
He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit
and born of the Virgin Mary.
He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried.
He descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again.
He ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again to judge the living and the dead.

Celebrant Do you believe in God the Holy Spirit?

People I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting.

Celebrant Will you continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of the bread, and in the prayers?

People I will, with God's help.

Celebrant Will you persevere in resisting evil, and, whenever you fall into sin, repent and return to the Lord?

People I will, with God's help.

Celebrant Will you proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ?

People I will, with God's help.

Celebrant Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself?

People I will, with God's help.

Celebrant Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?

People I will, with God's help.