

The Resurrection of Our Lord 2015

The ultimate test of whether something is true is whether it can be said graveside; whether it can be said at the mouth of an open grave and not fall flat.

Now, don't get me wrong, people say all sorts of things graveside, a lot of which amount to little more than sentimental perfume, it might smell nice for a moment, but only to soon floats off into the air forever. But we can all smell that, and know it as such. Dead bodies and dead dreams demand more than just a little spray of hallmark niceties. "It will all be okay", well, for you maybe, but now I have to deal with this huge whole in my life... "He's in a better place", really? I think here with me is a pretty good place!

Death has a way of making things pretty clear, it's a good "bs" detector.

If you can't say it graveside it's not only not true, it's not important. Standing at an open grave somehow makes everything we think life is about - everything we actually give ourselves to - all our busy, busy lives of work, study, sports, schedules, bills, home projects, furniture, decorating, cars, boats, vacations... well, seem pretty irrelevant. You don't hear many men talking about the cars they're working on, graveside. You don't hear many women complain they don't have enough clothes, graveside.

We've all had that experience graveside. Left speechless. What do we say? And no one knows what to say, but we fumble something out, and although what we said was likely pretty meaningless, at least those who mourn know that we care.

Indeed, what word can be said at the mouth of a grave, with someone dead right there? What word have we to say? We are left speechless.

It seems that the only real word is given to us by Holy Scripture when mankind committed treason against the Lord and was driven out of the garden and away from the source of life: "Remember you are dust and to dust you shall return!"

Why? Because we will all die. And all of this will be gone, and we and our loved ones, from Mr. Larson to Pierce, will follow in that way. For we are sinners, infected with the terminal disease of sin that kills everyone. As Dr. Luther said in his great resurrection hymn: "No son of man could conquer death, such ruin sin had wrought us. No innocence was found on earth, and therefore death had brought us into bondage from of old and ever grew more strong and bold, and held us a its captive."

For from that time, for every man and woman and child, the only real truth that stands up to scrutiny, the only thing that does sound like complete "bs" is "Remember, you are dust and to dust you shall return!" Otherwise we must follow Job's example: "I lay my hand on my mouth".

When the women disciples of Jesus went to his tomb on Sunday morning, I wonder if these words were ringing in their ears. Their beloved rabbi, master, and the One who had shown Himself to be God in the flesh had...died, his body beginning to decay in the tomb, at least they thought. And so, the last words spoken over one more life: "you are dust..."

But that morning, so early, before the sun rose, there was a new word spoken at Jesus' grave. Not a word of empty sentimentality that just floats into the atmosphere and has no weight, but a word that would change the whole fabric of reality and bring in a new world. A new truth ripped open a whole and crawling in mightly into our world. The words spoken by the angel sitting in Jesus' empty tomb: "Do not be

alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen; he is not here."

At that tomb these words did not fall flat, not some nice, but weightless sentiment, because the tomb was empty! Scripture assures us, with multiples witnesses, that the empty tomb of Jesus is not simply a matter of blind faith but a firm historical fact. For even Jesus' enemies were unable to produce a body in order to stop the Church from spreading this news.

But the significance for you and me is even more astounding. Jesus' death soaked in the sin of all the world - yours included - and the same sin that will one day kill you unless you are by faith and Baptism found in Christ - that same sin killed Jesus. He then descended into hell, the dead, to destroy death itself: "It was a strange and dreadful strife when life and death contended; the victory remained with life, the reign of death was ended. Holy Scripture plainly says that death is swallowed up by death, its sting is lost forever."

So, we see that there are really two truths in the end, only two words that can be said graveside: "you are dust and to dust you shall return" or "Christ is risen, and so shall this one rise!"

In obedience to Our Lord Jesus' command we bring Pierce Anthony to the waters of Holy Baptism, because Jesus promised that those who believe and are baptized will be saved from becoming eternal dust. This is not an act of magic, but an act of grace that Our Lord stoops down from his reigning place in Heaven, crawls into the water by the Holy Spirit and His Word, places His Name upon the Baptized, and so claims him back from sin, death, and the devil.

This promise is to be clung to forever. Frank and Cecelia are to put this Gospel promise into Pierce's ears again and again and again, that his

faith may grow, and he may grow into the disciple our Lord intends to fully grasp and make us of this greatest gift given to him in Baptism.