

## Homily - Easter Sunday - April 1, 2018

What exactly is heaven? More precisely, where is heaven? How do we get there? What is it like? What will I look like when or if I get there? Will my husband look the same or will I get a more updated model? These kinds of questions go on and on without even the slightest possibility of answering any one of them.

For centuries artists have represented heaven and heavenly creatures in various ways. Touched by an Angel reigned supreme on television for many years. Warren Beatty got in on the action with his film *Heaven Can Wait*. So many people try to describe the indescribable. I read obituaries that speak about the deceased now being angels. People cannot be angels. Heaven is such a mystery that it allows people to describe heaven in whatever way they choose especially since their description cannot be proven false.

But, when we come to church on Easter Sunday we speak about the resurrection from the dead. Paul in his writings makes it clear that, if there is no resurrection from the dead, then all of Christianity falls apart. Life after death, the resurrection from the dead to life in heaven, hell, or purgatory is an essential element of our faith even if we like to leave off the possibility of hell and purgatory.

Of course, at the total other end of the belief spectrum, there are people like the late Stephen Hawking who dismiss the whole idea of heaven in one sentence: "I regard the brain as a computer which will stop working when its components fail. There is no heaven or afterlife for broken-down computers; that is a fairy story for people afraid of the dark." How easy it is for some to obliterate away centuries of belief, research, and dedication by the mere stroke of a pen merely because one is not able to comprehend and accept the reasonableness of what the human mind cannot fully fathom.

Easter tells us quite clearly that there is a resurrection from the dead. Jesus rose triumphantly from his death. This same Jesus has promised us eternal life. Simply put, Easter is all about being reborn, being re-created, rising from the dead, and becoming a new person.

So many people live in tombs, yes, tombs. It could be a tomb of resentment because of some silly personal injury at one time in our life. It could be the tomb of fear about the future and what it holds for us. The tomb of confusion overwhelms some people's lives because they are

confused about their faith and how to deal with it. For some, the uncontrollable tomb of despair makes them unable to handle the seemingly impossible situations of life.

Then, this Jesus comes along and tells us that we don't have to live in those tombs or any other tomb that life may present. As his followers, we can be free of those tombs that we create for ourselves. In fact, some day we can be released from the tomb that holds our bodies after our death here on earth.

Is that hard to understand? Perhaps. Is it worthy of belief? At the risk of sounding like Sara Palin: "you betcha."

Easter is about rebirth, re-creation. Easter forces us to open our hearts to Jesus and to let him do for us what he has done for so many over the centuries. No tomb can restrain us or hold us back. Jesus has given us the power to rise from our tombs. Don't let this Easter pass you by as just another occasion to come to church. Rather commit to Jesus because only he can give us all good things.

This is the day the Lord has made let us be glad and rejoice!!!