

EASTER VIGIL 2013

Theme: Death by Sacrament

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We have become all too used to hearing of deaths by mass shootings and killings:

Bombings and I.E.D.s and drone strikes in Afghanistan or, here at home, gunman gone crazy in movies theaters or malls or elementary schools.

Our hearts are made sick by these constant reports and our seeming unwillingness as a nation to do anything to stop them.

Tonight there will be more mass deaths, thousands of them, and they will happen in cathedrals and churches.

Some will die here among us, in churches up and down the valley and throughout the world.

These deaths, however, will not be mourned but celebrated because they will be without bloodshed will be followed by rebirth into life that will not, that cannot die.

This Easter eve, an ancient mystery is being sacramentally dramatized:

The mystery of dying with Christ, of being buried with Christ, of rising to new life with Christ and of being led to the table of the Father with Christ.

The drama we are enacting tonight expresses our deepest beliefs about ourselves, about life, about God, our purpose, our future.

Tonight sums up in ritual who and what we are.

The rituals say we have died – we drowned! -- and been buried as selfish sinful creatures of the earth.

They say we have been raised up with Jesus Christ to a new existence as children of God.

They say we have been anointed with the Spirit of the Risen Jesus to carry on his work in our work.

They say the food and drink of the Father's Table will nourish and sustain us in that work.

But our rituals speak of more than this present moment or of this passing life.

They speak of eternal mysteries too.

When the moment comes for each of us to lay down in death and to be buried, just as Christ himself died and was buried, this mystery holds that that the Risen Jesus will be waiting for us on the other side of death.

There he will lift us up and anoint us with his own eternal Spirit.

And, then, taking us by the hand, he will lead us to the Banquet Table of heaven where he will introduce us to his Father.

No less a mystery than this is being sacramental acted out among us tonight.

And so as we see Chris and Jonathan and Nicholas and Jennifer drowning and being buried in the waters of baptism, as we see them anointed with the Spirit of Jesus and as we see them eating at the Table of the Father,

...let us see ourselves dying and being buried in Christ,

...let us see ourselves being greeted on the other side of death by the Risen Christ,

...let us see ourselves being anointed by his eternal spirit,

...let us see ourselves being introduced to the Father Almighty.

For this, brothers and sisters, is what we celebrate tonight.