

11:15 a.m. The Feast of the Resurrection  
Choral Holy Eucharist with Choir, Organ, and Brass  
The Rev. James H. Littrell  
Sunday April 9th, 2023

In the name of Our Risen Savior, Jesus Christ, Amen.

When we gathered in this space last night in the dark, kindled, out there on the terrace, a new fire, walked into a darkness of the church with this Light of Christ before us, and landed up here, at least some of us did, in this, what feels like, to me a Holy place.

I got up here and talked to the folks assembled about the generosity of God. All week I had been thinking about how gifted we are by God in every moment of our lives, and how wide and deep that generosity goes.

I talked a little bit about how it began because last night we heard a little summary of the whole history of us as God's people beginning with that wonderful story in Genesis, our very beginning, our origin story.

In the beginning, God created light out of Darkness, Earth out of nothing. Out of the vast Cosmos came this little planet, and on it things began to give us life, and here we are all these years later through the whole history of the human race. All the things we have done good, bad and indifferent across all those millennia bring us to this day.

I thought all week about the moments of generosity that we celebrate as God's people. I hope we do it every day, as we look around the world we inhabit here. I hope we remember, as we do, all the sacrifices made by those who got us here, those nameless millions, those who built out the possibility for us to be in this room today.

Last night, I called people's attention to that beautiful ceiling up there. If you haven't looked at it carefully, do, it's an amazing thing. But that wood was hewn by someone and put in place by someone. These pillars were built by someone. The marble was carved out of rock and put on this floor by people long ago, so we could walk on these holy stones today.

All that is a sign of God's great generosity to us, and it surveys our whole history as God's people, and it was making me very happy all last week. I also wanted to call to the attention of the people last night, and I want to do this today as well. All those, you may not know, who gathered here all week long to make this room the glory it is today. Those flowers in the windows did not appear by magic. God did not appear here on Saturday morning and go *poof* and plant flowers in our windows. God did not take scissors and trim the weeds out of the beds around the church. That was all people doing that, people in this amazing community we call St. Martin-in-the-Fields, and I just wanted to lift all of them up.

To all the people gathered last night, and now to all of you, for everything they did to make this day happen. So we can gather in this space, and I also wanted to thank these people who led our parade, and led all of us through this holy space and will lead us out of here. These unsung heroes of liturgy, that we do so joyfully, and we try to do so well here at St Martin's. And these folks behind me who sing the praise of God out into this space every week, not as performance, but as participation in the love of God being cast forth into the world. It's a remarkable thing that happens in this place. and all those things are signs of God's generosity. But there is something else that I wanted to talk about this morning, and that comes out of our reading from The Acts of the Apostles.

I wanted to talk about how that generosity is apportioned out into the world. So I call you back into Peter's little conversation with Cornelius. We are told the other Gentiles, that means the others, those who were other than Peter and his crowd in the world. He's trying to convince them of something fundamentally true about our God. Here is what he says, "I truly understand that God shows no partiality." We live in a time where partiality is everywhere. We apportion ourselves out in little tribes and we get about the business of hating one another. Our God will have none of that. Anytime anyone claims God for their cause they are on the wrong track. They have, as we say some of us who were very old like me, they have erred and strayed like lost sheep. Because God is the God who shows no partiality, and this place, this Easter morning is a place that shows no partiality.

One of the wonders of St. Martin-in-the-Fields is its spaciousness. Its ability to hold so many people in God's love. We do that not ourselves, but out of the pure love and promise of God, that is our Resurrection Hope on this Easter morning. You missed a real treat at nine o'clock when yours truly here had little wings on his back and reprized the role of Harold Angel. Harold

Angel made an appearance on Christmas Eve. I don't know if you were with us then, but Harold Angel made an appearance and Harold Angel was very grumpy, reluctant to go down and visit this dirty manger where a child had just been born. Harold grumped and groaned the whole time. So, the author of that play, thought it was good that Harold Angel should have another chance. This morning Harold Angel appeared on the stone that had been rolled away, I think by Harold Angel, from the tomb, the empty tomb. Harold Angel in this new role of welcome and announcement greeted the women who first came to the tomb and found it empty and tried to explain to them not to be afraid. Not to be afraid of that emptiness, that they would find in the lives that they were going to now lead, as Jesus people. They would find in that life they were going to lead together into the future. They would find Jesus in everything they did as long as they met Jesus on the road they traveled, and spoke Jesus' love into every step they took. That is our Easter commandment. Our Easter commandment, which comes to us across all the centuries of who we are as God's people and including all of us who, you know maybe if we weren't getting paid for it, would also be Easter and Christmas Episcopalians. God shows no partiality. All of us are included in that promise. That if we walk in love, the love that Christ gives us, we are promised resurrection and life.

Earlier today, many of you know, we put the remains of Frank Griswold in a hole out here in the columbarium in a silk bag, which Frank would have loved, which was secreted inside a gorgeous Easter egg, which I think Frank must have designed from heaven. It was an amazing thing on Easter morning to take Bishop Griswold's remains and put them in this Holy Ground, but all I could think of while that was going on was the New Life of Christ that meant for all of us. That that space where we are destined, all of us, to end up means for all of us that we are raised always into that new life whether we're a bishop, or like me, a very very grateful and humble priest. We are all promised that new life on this day.

It is a Wonder that our God shows no partiality but only asks of us that we do our best to walk in love, to love one another as fully and with as much capacity and capaciousness and spaciousness as we can. To make room in our hearts and in our community for every single person who comes here wanting to walk in that walk with us. It also is an amazing thing that out of that walk we are called to go out there and to touch the lives of those who know not that love: the hungry, the poor, everyone in our community, and in our world, we can reach and do that in palpable ways that make a difference. Bring life where there is no life. Bring hope where there is no hope. That, too, is our Easter Journey. That is where we are called with Mary and the other

Mary we go to the tomb.

Really, very often, I can tell you we find it empty. We find it empty and we despair. Then comes a moment out of nowhere that says to us "Lift up your hearts. I am with you. The God of love is with you. The God of love is with us all," and we are told to go quickly. Go quickly and tell the world that God lives in the love we share with one another. Every day, I pray every day. I pray that we may all learn every day better and better to walk in that spacious impartial love because there I see the only possibility that this world of ours will be healed.

God will be with us in that enterprise. I am sure, and God will be with you every day of your Easter lives.

Amen