

The Fifth Sunday of Easter
April 28, 2013
The Rev. Robert H. Malm

Knowing the Truth

Alleluia! Christ is risen! The Lord is risen indeed! Alleluia!

“Examine the facts ... search for evidence.” The reports and stories about the Boston bombings continue, although yesterday’s edition of *The Washington Post* was the first in 12 days to not include anything about Boston on the front page. Yesterday, on page 4, there were two short profiles of two people injured in the blast. However, this morning’s edition has a picture of the family of the bombing suspects staring out at us over the headline, “Portrait of a Faded American Dream.” Examine the facts ... search for evidence. Investigators are digging through a landfill, trying to find a computer the suspects used and then threw away shortly before the bombings. Some in Congress want more information about how the FBI and CIA followed information about the suspects. Examine the facts ... search for evidence.

I was in Boston for the marathon with my two daughters and Leslie, my wife. Leslie was near the finish line, very close to where the second bomb exploded. Everyone in our family was safe, not physically injured. We were showered with an outpouring of concern, care and love from so many here at Grace and beyond. And we are very thankful for this support from our parish family and from this wide, diverse network of friends. The first truth I take away from Boston is how blessed we are with all this love and support!

For many, many years I have thought that the devil works harder in April. Examine the facts ... search for evidence. Virginia Tech, Oklahoma City, Columbine, Dr. King’s assassination; now Boston joins the list. As we celebrate Easter, the glorious victory of our Risen Lord Jesus Christ, we know there is still evil in this world. The renunciations made at every baptism remind us of this power of evil, even when we celebrate new life, new love, new hope.

When we think about the Resurrection we don’t have many facts or much evidence. *Holy Scripture* gives us five appearances of the Risen Jesus on Easter Day; one a week later; one 40 days later when Christ ascends into heaven; and just three other accounts spread out over 4½ weeks. Not much evidence.

The evidence does come though as we read the Acts of the Apostles and come to understand how the Resurrection, Easter, changed the entire world. The story of the Roman centurion Cornelius’ conversion and baptism in Acts chapter 10 begins the world-wide spread of Christianity. The followers of the Risen Christ will not be a cult within Judaism, bound by Jewish purity laws and rituals. Peter realized that God’s gift of grace was for all, circumcised and uncircumcised, male and female. As we sing, “In Christ there is no East or West, in him no South or North, but one great fellowship of love throughout the whole wide earth...” This is the truth Peter discovered. It is the truth Paul

discovered after his own conversion. Knowing the truth, Peter, Paul and the early Church changed the world. This is the story in the Acts of the Apostles.

Knowing the truth is living Jesus' new commandment to love as he has loved us. The evidence of Easter truth comes as his love transforms the world. We always see this truth, this love, this transformation at times of tragedy and when the force of evil seems so powerful. We saw it in Boston with so many first responders, so many lives saved.

For the fifth week in a row this Easter season we are celebrating the sacrament of Holy Baptism here at Grace. We hope and pray and work together to help those who are baptized to discover, to know the truth about Jesus Christ; the truth about the mission of the Church; the truth about this world we live in. The gift of faith is the most wonderful gift we share. And this gift can only be shared as it is joined with hope and love..... Faith, hope and love go together.

"Who was I that I could hinder God?" Peter proclaimed to the conservative Jewish Christians in Jerusalem after Cornelius' baptism and conversion. We must not hinder God. We must let the Holy Spirit do God's work in the most surprising ways, among the most surprising people, at times that might even shock, if not scare us. There is no limit, no restriction on the work of God's Spirit.

Karen Armstrong, the noted author and scholar, has written, "Religion is doing things that change you..." Every person who is baptized is changed. Every parent and Godparent who supports a child and brings them to be baptized is changed. To be faithful, hopeful and loving, even while battling evil, will change us.

Boston is changed forever. Those who were there two weeks ago are changed forever. Examining the facts, searching for evidence will continue. Jesus said, *"If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free..."* (John 8:32). Know the truth, share the truth, live the truth.

Acts 11:1-18
Revelation 21:1-6
John 13:31-35