

April 4, 2010 - Easter Sunday
The Very Reverend Dr. Philip C. Linder

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be always acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our strength and our redeemer. Amen.

On Maundy Thursday of Holy Week, as the weather turned into that of beautiful springtime, I remembered again why I love living in Columbia, South Carolina. In fact the weather was so beautiful and inviting that it was a struggle to go back inside to write, reflect, and work on this Easter sermon. Easter is the holiest feast day in the Christian calendar, and the powerful drama of the liturgy with Baptism, Renewal of our Baptismal Covenant, Eucharist, and the proclamation of Holy Scripture that the Lord Jesus Christ is Risen, makes it as well a challenging sermon to write—the preacher struggles with what more can be said?

After a morning of meetings, before starting this sermon, I first went to have lunch on Forest Drive, where a gentlemen came up to my table to talk about his ministry with Truckers in the Columbia region called “Transport for Christ.” He and his wife are missionaries to the Trucking Community—they preach Christ

Crucified and Risen to those who work in our nation as truckers. They have a truck with a cross, and at truck stops they preach Christ and minister in his Name. The chaplain told me how the trucking community is often made up of wanderers, searching for community. As I responded with a “Wow that is fascinating that you do this ministry at truck stops,” he responded with, “Well Dean it’s not like they can’t just pull into a church parking lot with an eighteen wheeler.”

Of course you do not have to be trucker to be a wanderer. I suspect that many of us, if not all of us gathered here today to celebrate Easter 2010 have at one point or another experienced being in a place of wandering or searching. The babies being baptized today have exciting years of such a journey that awaits them. A friend of mine who is a therapist claims that every individual has a theme that they spend their lifetimes trying to work out. A theme song for my own life could be U 2’s: *I Still Haven’t found What I am Looking For.*” What is it that you are looking for?

The strangest thing about Christianity is why it got going at all. There were at least a dozen or so other movements that arose in Palestine 100 years either side of Jesus. These movements were

led as well by young Jews who were prepared to lead a revolution and risk their very life to bring in the reign of God's kingdom. The Jews lived in hopeful expectation of the Messiah, however in each case as the leader was put to death by the Roman rulers, so too the movement died. And yet with Jesus' crucifixion the movement did not end. What caused or empowered the disciples to carry on and establish the Christian Church?

We heard proclaimed in John's Gospel that on that first Easter, Mary was crying outside of the empty tomb in the garden. Perhaps in her mind and from experience, history had already taught her that with Jesus' death all was lost—the "Way" was over. And then we discover that Jesus was standing near Mary, unrecognizable to her in his resurrected glory and he asks the following question, *Whom are you looking for?* Mary was of course looking for the body of Jesus, certainly not expecting to find him resurrected in her midst.

William Temple once wrote, *To worship is to quicken the conscience by the holiness of God, to feed the mind with the truth of God, to purge the imagination by the beauty of God, to open the heart to the love of God, to devote the will to the purpose of God.*

When you and I come together in worship we experience the

resurrected Christ in the midst of the gathered community, the Church. God is actively seeking you out to be a regular worshiper, as Jesus declared: *The true worshiper will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for such the Father seeks to worship Him. (John 12:32)* You see worship is our natural response to God's constant attempt to love us. Can you live with yourself if you deny responding to God—if you deny Jesus' call to “worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve?”

The Christian faith not only survived but flourished and spread rapidly because through Jesus' resurrection on Easter, the kingdom of God which Christ had announced and taught was birthed. And the community of believers in Jesus' life, death, and resurrection came together as the Church, the called out, to be with one another in Baptism, Eucharist, and prayer. What they discovered is that what they had been looking for all along was found in the Risen Lord. And they with great enthusiasm quickly went out to tell the world.

Still haven't found what you're looking for? When I hear those words, I know deep within that I found Jesus Christ a long time ago—my search is how to respond to God's will and serve faithfully. This Easter Day put yourself in the garden in Mary's

place; the Resurrected Lord now asks you, *Whom are you looking for?* Can you answer today, *I am looking for you Jesus; how may I worship and serve you faithfully?*

May God bless you and your loved ones this Easter Day through the Risen Lord. **+Amen.**