

Homily ---Easter April 12, 2009 Terry and Fred Quinn

Fred---Having spent much of my time telling so many stories, I am certainly aware of the immense value of stories, but I also realize that stories often have different meanings for different people, while containing basic truths.

As we know, Jesus often told stories in the form of parables. The gospel writers were also storytellers, telling the stories of Jesus and what happened during his ministry and its aftermath. Their stories very often overlapped and sometimes differed or were told from a different viewpoint. For example, in the telling of the Easter story---when we read the gospels we find Mark, the earliest Easter story writer, with the shortest story and without an appearance scene. Matthew describes an earthquake and the appearance of an angel, and Luke has Jesus appearing only in Jerusalem. We also find different versions of the burial of Jesus---- and unlike the other 3, John is a poet as well as a storyteller. We find the sequence of events changing in the 4 stories-----but we also know that there is basic meaning and truth in each of the stories---focusing on the resurrection or transformation of Jesus as he continues his life of the Spirit rooted in love.

We have several family members who have either acted in plays and/or have directed them. Our daughter Marisa and Terry's sister Janice are trained actresses and directors. They've done the same play in different ways, yet have remained true to the meaning of the play. They will both tell you of the various ways a director can set the stage to tell a story. They may block it in different ways, they may vary the type of scenery or manner in which the actors make the scenes real for the audience. But the basic message of the play comes across even if the direction varies. The same similarities and differences occur in the telling of the Easter story. In the scene described in today's gospel , we begin with the empty tomb and the meeting of the transformed Jesus with Mary Magdalene. Jesus, perhaps knowing that Mary and the women will make an immediate personal connection with him, appears to them first. Moreover, it indicates a trust in the women as messengers of the good news of new life---just as women bring forth new life. And now Terry will be a messenger of good news and today take on the role of story teller as she tells a personal story relating to Easter.

Terry.....Before I begin my personal story, I'd like to tell you that around this time of year when I was teaching first grade, we would always do the plant section of our science program. We would talk about how a plant grows from a tiny seed and how it is fed through the roots and then how we see the bud open up into a beautiful flower. If you've ever watched Sesame Street, you might remember the beautiful film of the flower petals opening up in slow motion. As I was watching my own tulips open up I thought of Jesus opening himself up to the infinite Spirit after his death on the cross. -----The image of the flower opening up stayed with me as I thought about the story I would like to tell today. -----

---Easter is a significant day in the history of our family. Our daughter Marisa and her husband Kevin are celebrating their 6<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary today. My mother and father were married on Easter Sunday April 13, 1941 in Holy Rosary Church in Jersey City. This was done as special favor to my grandfather, who was the organist at the church. My brother Cono, who was named for this same grandfather, died on Easter Sunday April 23, 2000. He died at approximately 11:00 in the morning. At the moment that he passed on into new life, 3 things happened that our friend Dick would say indicated synchronicity. . . . .Cono had had what could be termed a turbulent, unhappy life marked by a troubled childhood, which in retrospect we realized was probably the result of undiagnosed learning disabilities. He was always in trouble—and troubled. He did have one teacher in high school, who recognized his problem, tried to help him and even interested him in theater. He was somewhat musical and with the help of this teacher performed in some productions. He had various jobs after high school and eventually joined the Air Force and became a security guard. He was sent to Vietnam and was there for over a year. You can imagine what that was like, and when he eventually returned home, he was addicted to drugs and alcohol. He was not easy to be around, but he loved animals and music and after a time, he decided to study music, which he did for awhile, but we suspect that the other aspects of college were very hard for him and he never finished. However, he played the piano quite well, and loved to play. As a result of what was probably a predisposition to it and his time in Vietnam, he developed Crohn's disease. For awhile, he really had the disease under control with a very stringent diet, but unfortunately he didn't stick with it. He had his own painting business and supported himself for a time, but eventually the Crohns became so bad he needed surgery, which he refused. At that time, when he was very ill, Fred and my cousin/sister Gail helped him so much, cleaned up his apartment, and with his friend Robert, took care of his 6 cats. He wound up at Clara Maass hospital where Gail worked and he became progressively worse. During Holy week, we visited him, and the doctors tried to convince him of the need for surgery, but he refused. On Easter Sunday we intended to visit him later in the day. Our daughter Monica was at our house. Fred and I went to St. Michael's church to the 10:30 mass. We were late, so we were ushered into the sanctuary. (the pastor at that time was a pretty affable fellow) and I could look down the aisle of the church very easily. Simultaneously, Gail was sitting with Cono as he was struggling to stay alive. She had a mass on the TV --a broadcast from Rome-- with resounding music playing. Just as a crescendo with rloud Alleluias played, Cono died. At the same time—as I later found out---Monica for some reason had picked up a tape we had in the house. The tape had been made from an old record with mine and my brother and sister's voice on it. Something impelled Monica to play the tape and unbelievably she began to hear Cono playing the piano on it. To this day, we don't know how Cono playing the piano got on that tape. At the same time (strangely I had looked up at the clock in St. Michael's church and because we were sitting in the sanctuary I could see it clearly and therefore knew that it

was 11:00) The congregation was singing and coming up to communion. There was music in 3 places at the moment of Cono's death and the strangest of all was his own piano playing on a tape that I had not heard or seen in years. I like to think that Cono was like the bud I mentioned before that opens its petals, transforms into the flower it was meant to be. When Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene he told her not to weep—he kind of said “Mary, it's me.” The person that I was is here, but in a different way for I have opened myself to the life of the Spirit in new ways. The reassuring message of Easter to Mary Magdalene and the disciples and to my brother Cono---- and to us--- is an Alleluia—to the open, creative Spirit of love dwelling within Jesus and within us---and the music with its crescendo of ongoing life and love plays on.