



The Inclusive Community

Easter Vigil

April 3, 2010

Luke 24:1-12?

Homily of Rev. Dr. Anthony T. Padovano

We are blind when the darkness is total, and we are blind when the light is intense. We can only see if the darkness allows light and if the light is blended with darkness.

The universe is a chiaroscuro of light and dark. That term, "chiaroscuro" which we use in English and which every artist knows, is an Italian word. It means something like "clear darkness." We do not have a single English word that says this or says it as well.

The universe is chiaroscuro, a medley of light and darkness.

Human life develops in an environment of light and darkness. It cannot develop too close to the sun; there light destroys it. It cannot develop near a black hole or in dark matter.

We have been made to inhabit the shadows and to dance in partial light. We live somewhere near despair and never far from hope. Too much despair and we wither; too much hope and we drift into fantasy.

Many of us believe that human history came as near total darkness as it is likely to get in the crucifixion of the absolute goodness we saw in the heart of Jesus. The darkness was so total that Christians believed God died on the cross. Such an oxymoron! How could God die? Death is not as much the dying of the light but absence. God dies when God is absent. The dark night of the soul is absence. "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

The message of Easter is that no death is final and that no darkness is total. The message of Easter is that despair sooner or later forces the light back. The message of Easter is that Easter cannot happen without death, without abandonment, without, deep darkness. The message of Easter is that the tomb must be sealed shut, no light visible, before Easter can occur. The message of Easter is that the nails and the wounds and the aching heart of a mother holding her dead son are all necessary for

Easter to happen. If Easter is experienced too quickly, then the cross and the death and the darkness are not real and hope cannot happen. If there is no possibility for Easter, then the darkness is total and we are forever blind and lost.

It is all chiaroscuro. We must let the darkness and the sunshine happen. We must let our hearts break so that God can show us Easter. We must feel all the absence and all the loss so that we can hear the Risen Christ call our name ("Mary") and so that we can see Christ on the seashore and come near enough to hear him ask:
"Peter, do you love me?"

Easter is possible only for the wounded and the lost, the broken and the frightened. Easter is God's way of telling us that all the sorrows of life are only half the story and death is only an interlude. Darkness is nothing more than a better way to see the light.