

Please accept my grateful appreciation and
Thank you
to all who sent cards, donations, personal gifts, or Mass intentions
on the occasion of my father's death.
Your kindnesses to me and to my family have not gone unnoticed.
I am edified that so many of you have shared words of support,
made the trip across town for the wake or funeral,
and others who sent good wishes or personal gifts.
I would prefer to send a personal note to each of you,
yet the volume of cards and responses are more than I can reasonably do
at this time.
On behalf of myself and all my family,
May God bless each and all of you for sharing in the passing of my father
into the peace of God's glory
through your prayerful support and good wishes.
Father John Esper and family

The transformation of the Risen Christ is upon us. More than a feast to be celebrated each year, the gift of the Resurrection is a living dynamic we find in our lives each day. How is the life of the Resurrection known in us? How do we make it a living reality rather than a liturgical day on the calendar that we keep?

These are the questions of a living faith in the Christian mystery. Are we persons growing in love and self-giving? This question is simple enough, yet it takes a conscious effort to make it happen. We all inevitably grow simply by the passing of time. Life bears its effect on us for good or ill. None of us really stays the same over the course of a lifetime. However, this is not the growth and transformation I am talking about.

Growth in the life of the Risen One is a conscious and active seeking with desire for the Spirit and love of Jesus. Are we trying to grow in love? Do we desire to mature in the gift of love and salvation God has given us in Jesus? The power and the transformation of the Holy Spirit are constantly around us, yet are we attentive and desiring of the healing love that calls us to wholeness? We cannot do this work alone. It is the work and action of the Spirit on our behalf. Still our openness and desire are essential if we are to be transformed in love toward wholeness.

Peter is the prime example this weekend. In today's gospel, the particular details in this account by the sea are for two reasons. First, John is confirming for us the reality and authenticity of the fact that Jesus was alive. Secondly, John is forming our faith in the power of the Risen Christ by telling us of the experience of Peter in his transformation to the Lord.

Jesus returns from the dead, yet remains in the role of servant. Like the humble washing of feet at the Last Supper, Jesus now accepts the domestic chore of making breakfast. Notice the different response of Peter. At the washing of feet, Peter resisted. When Jesus prepares a meal, Peter allows Jesus to feed him. Peter has surrendered his ego and yields to the service and love of his Master. More than his own doing, Peter has been inspired and converted; awakened by the Holy Spirit. Now he sees Jesus for who he really is and himself as he truly is before Jesus.

Peter's virtue and goodness is no longer for or about himself, but only for Jesus. Jesus' question to Peter is a kind of a test, while at the same time an opportunity for Peter to reveal his new awareness and commitment. 'Peter, do you love me, more than these?' Peter does not entertain the chance to compare his love, more or less, to any of the others. He directs his response back to Jesus. 'Lord, you know I love you'. Peter has learned it is not about him. His life and his love is now all about Jesus.

This is the yielding and the growth to which we are called in the grace of the Resurrection. Peter did not come to this new self all by himself. Such a profound change of mind and heart could only happen by the action and gift of the Holy Spirit. This is the conversion that God wants and intends for all of us. Still, God will not act on our behalf without our openness and desire for the maturing truth of love. Peter was ripe and ready for the grace. He did love Jesus despite his denial of the Lord. The shame and guilt of his offense opened Peter to the action of the Spirit that brought him to his true heart's desire: oneness with the Lord. The Lord took the opportunity to free Peter from himself because he desired it. This is why Jesus tells Peter, 'Follow me'. The action of the Spirit is for the service of God's purpose. Peter came with a renewed love and a full-hearted yes.

This is the joy and the adventure of Christian conversion in the grace of the Resurrection. We are all supposed to be growing in the love, joy, peace, and gentleness of the Holy Spirit. Name your desire for the Lord. Speak your desire to know and love Jesus more fully. God will hear your prayer and satisfy your desire with the Holy Spirit.

Father John Esper