Easter: An invitation to take faith seriously

One of the things kids hate to hear is, “You’ll understand when you’re older.” In fact, that’s probably also something adults hate to say, because we know that the reason we have to say it is because it’s difficult to put into words some of the most important truths life has taught us.

We know our words can’t begin to say certain things.

Haven’t we all had the experience of knowing something — of being convinced of it and being willing to stake our lives on it — and found it impossible to put into words? I’m referring to the kinds of things that come from the experience of life’s hard knocks, or life’s deep joys or sorrows.

On the other hand, there are times when we envy the child’s direct and immediate way of understanding things we find hard to believe. Haven’t you ever seen something — with your own two eyes, clear as a bell, unmistakably — but missed its meaning?

Sometimes it’s difficult for us to accept truly good news — perhaps because life has hardened us or turned us into skeptics, or because we are always trying to analyze things and look for the hitch.

At those times we wish we had the direct understanding of a child.

**Liberated from sin**

From that first Easter Sunday, the Resurrection of Christ has been one of those truths which have evoked varying reactions. When the “beloved disciple” entered the empty tomb, he immediately believed; for him seeing was believing.

On the other hand, the Gospels also tell us stories of disciples who saw Jesus after the Resurrection but found it difficult to believe it was he. Mary Magdalene at first thought he was the gardener! St. John tells us to remember that they did not yet understand the Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.

Yes, it is historical fact: The Lord Jesus, the Son of God and Savior of the world, died a painful death on a cross and three days later rose from the dead. He will come again in glory, and we await his return at the end of time.

I am often struck by the excited, spontaneous responses evoked by Jesus in those who encountered him.

Hearing his call, fishermen abandoned family and trade; touched by his healing hand — and despite his plea to the contrary — the healed went forth to speak his praises; liberated from the weight of sin by his unbounded mercy, the forgiven leapt in joyful freedom; sensing his authenticity and clarity, skeptics dropped their sarcasm and surrendered to him; seeing the truth of his Way, sinners repented and never returned to their former ways.

Reflecting on such spontaneity, I ask myself: Am I as quick to follow Jesus, to proclaim him, to persevere in freedom? After all, I am every bit as much called, healed and forgiven as they.

**Easter is an invitation**

John reports that Jesus’ Resurrection evoked just such excitement in Mary Magdalene, Peter and the beloved disciple. Mary “ran” to tell Peter, who with the other disciple “ran” to see for themselves. Seeing, breathless, they believed.

The implications of his rising are enormous. Not simply a rabbi, a healer, a reconciler, Jesus is God’s Son, who destroyed the grasp of death, ransomed us from slavery to sin and opened the door to eternal life. Death itself died on the cross. There is only life for those who follow the risen Lord.

Am I slow to understand the Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead, or will I run in his ways, proclaiming his Resurrection by a changed life?

Easter is an invitation to take faith seriously, to recommit ourselves to its practice every day. The good news is that each time we do so, and each time we fail but try again, we are taking a step through the door, Jesus Christ, to heaven.

Living our faith and trusting in its truth, especially when the going gets rough, we find that our faith deepens. Faith is for believing, but it is also for living.

Faith helps us see everything as it really is, in God’s eyes. “Jesus said to them … believe in the light, so that you may become children of the light” (see Jn 12:35–36).

Happy Easter! May Christ’s victory over death fill you with light and hope, and may you find in him the fulfillment of your deepest longing.

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**Mary and the pope: A three-day revolution**

**BY AUXILIARY BISHOP EUSEBIO ELIZONDO**

Four hundred years ago, while Cuba was still under the Spanish crown, a little image of the Blessed Virgin Mary was found on the premises of a major copper mine near Santiago. Since then, both the mine and the Blessed Virgin had been very generous to the people of Cuba.

Through the centuries, evangelization and many miraculous physical healings have been attributed to the intercession of the Mother of God under the name of the Virgin of the Charity of Copper (Virgen de la Caridad del Cobre), the name taken because of the location where the holy image was found.

The Cuban Conference of Bishops, desiring to highlight this important anniversary, graciously invited the Holy Father to visit the island. Pope Benedict XVI happily accepted what would be the second visit of a pope to this country, after John Paul II’s visit 14 years prior to this date.

For over 50 years now the communist regime has unsuccessfully tried to control and dictate the people’s faith and beliefs. During his three-day visit to this small but vibrant country, the Holy Father and all the bishops present were impacted by the unquenchable spirit and spiritual strength of these Caribbean islanders.

**Need for change**

The Holy Father celebrated Mass in Santiago and Havana. Both celebrations were held in iconic communist plazas with the generous cooperation of the government. Also participating respectfully during the celebrations was the current president, Raul Castro. Over 200,000 Cubans attended both celebrations, and many more were present in the streets while a procession joyfully carried the Blessed Virgin’s image to the gathering sites.

The liturgies and organization were flawless. There was a harmonious use of reverent solemnity using Latin and classical orchestral hymns, skillfully combined with rhythms of salsa and Caribbean percussion.

In his homilies, the Holy Father clearly and firmly stated the need to change the political ideology that has tried and failed to control the beliefs...