

Feast of the Most Holy Redeemer



Lyn Constable Maxwell's
Crucified and Risen Christ :
REDEEMER

I will try to say something about the ways in which redemption and the Redeemer have been understood in the recent enough understanding of the Congregation that carries his name. I think there are several steps.

The Story that formed us:

Let me mention, as a starting point, the juridical and apologetic thinking about redemption, that many of us older ones would have been brought up on. It made us a community of thoroughly atoned-for sinners, who were still trying to make up for wrong things we were still worried about doing. Redemption came from the death of Jesus. We were Good Friday people.

A developing new story (Vatican II):

Then came the resurrection. We discovered its place in the mystery of salvation. F. X. Durrwell led the way. He says he had his initial insights into it while still in the seminary in 1937. His definitive breakthrough publication (The

Resurrection of Jesus) came out in 1950. His last writing on it is dated 2001 (Christ our

Passover). He died in 2005 at the age of 93 and 8 months. Those of us who saw, even partially, what he saw so fully, became a community enlivened by the Resurrection of Jesus. Our 'new' constitutions should have been dedicated to the risen one. We were Easter people.

A developing new story (today):

Since then we have been teasing out more and more of the implications of resurrection.

Resurrection as *Inclusion*:

We have seen resurrection as inclusion. To be redeemed means to be included, through the person and life/death/resurrection of Jesus, into God's love and life, as a matter of justice, God's kind of justice, God's way of binding God's self to be infinitely bountiful to us. God has not only delivered us from the evils (like sin and guilt) that might worry us, God has acquired us for God's own Self, forever, in our lives now, and in our lives beyond death. Redemption is much more copious than pardon for sin and healing for hurts. It is God's great act of including everyone in Jesus risen. He is the great Includer. We are the community of the wholly integrated Includer. Our mission is to include all who are in any way excluded, anywhere. Our community life is one of inclusion – without any shadow of discrimination. Our Eucharists are a thanksgiving for the all-including dimension of the resurrection. We are gatherers into the God who raises us.

"All this is from God, who through Christ has 'gathered' us to himself and given to us the ministry of 'gathering'. That is, God was in Christ, 'gathering the universe to himself, not counting trespasses against anyone, and entrusting to us the message of 'gathering'. So we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We beseech you, on behalf of Christ, be 'gathered' into God." (2 Cor, 5, 17-21)

Resurrection as *Reversing*:

We have seen resurrection and inclusion as a process of reversing everything that is not right. The way Jesus lived, and died, and rose showed that God had acted in him to reverse everything that is wrong with the world. In him, there is the Great Reversal. Condemnation, shame, oppression, and death are reversed and transformed into vindication, glory, freedom, and undying life. This great reversal started in Jesus, and goes on still through his Spirit in us. Doing that reversal in our own time is our vocation.

In Jesus risen, the dead live, the lame walk, the blind see, the deaf hear, captives are set free...

In Jesus risen, the last are first, the least are feasted, the lost are found...

In Jesus risen, the poor are rich, the hungry are well fed, the suffering are comforted, the sorrowful are filled with joy...

In Jesus risen, the weak are strong, the sinners are forgiven, the shamed are honoured, the cursed are blessed, enemies are neighbours, slaves are sons and brothers...

In Jesus risen, the old is made new, the impossible happens, sin is sting-less, death is defeated...

This is resurrection as reversal. It is the reversal that effects inclusion. It includes everything and everyone by reversing the position of the excluded and including them. We are trouble-making people: we overturn people's assumptions and show them something More and Bigger.

The surprise of it all:

That is why we call Jesus the ‘Redeemer’ – the reverser who is the includer... of all peoples. Unlimited is his redemption. There is always newness here. There is always the overturning of impossibilities, and the emergence of surprise. We are a community of the Reversing One, where we work to make everything new all the time, and the left-outs get a good surprise because we are around. We do, too, when we do it with them.

The Gospel Backdrop – the old news from Rome:

Jesus’ story was written up in the gospels. It was good news. But it was written up against the foil, or backdrop, of another story, another gospel. It was the official propaganda of the Roman Empire. It was written up by the spin doctors of Rome. It claimed that through the Roman Emperor there would be comfort for the privileged, but it would come on the backs of the conquered, the enslaved, and the (literally) crucified losers. It was peace through conquest, security through oppression, salvation through crucifixion, all for the glory of the Roman Caesar and his entourage. They wrote up Caesar’s story – with heavenly signs at his birth, providential portents at his accession to the throne, divine genius shining through his deeds, and the current Caesar demanding to be worshipped as a god. They even imagined him ascending into the heavens after his death.

The Gospel point- the fresh news - Jesus, Redeemer:

When the evangelists wrote their gospels of Jesus, they used all this language and all these symbols. They said that the good news of Jesus reversed everything Rome had ever aimed at, and included everyone Rome had left out. Jesus brought peace through a different kind of justice from the kind practiced in Rome. It did not come through war and victory and power and violence. It came through gentleness, and simple living, and understanding, and communion. The ‘holy redeemer’ of the world was not an Emperor, but Jesus.

Living Redemption:

Jesus and his followers do their reversals by doing something about the cancer of power in politics (Roman, British, American, Middle Eastern, Global) and bringing God’s justice to those who have been hurt by imperial ‘civilisations’.

We are becoming slowly a community ready to act for more than ‘social’ justice, rather for the justice of God, on behalf of the put-down, and the hurting, and the left-out of what is taken to be ‘normal life’. We want to be a community of socially sensitive responders in our actual situations.

Isaian insight for today:

Some of us who read Scripture a lot have found some poetry for all this. We read it in the second half of the book of Isaiah the prophet. At that time, Israel was in exile. Its symbols did not ring true. Its founding story didn’t seem to suggest it had any future. Its leaders were a dead lot in comparison with those of old. Its covenant had degenerated into a community. It was a drama without a meaning, without a finale. It might have been old, but it had lost its newness. [Does it sound like some of us sometimes?]

There was once a prophecy to this people. It gave this people some news. It gave it good news. It gave it new news. It told of new symbols, of a new story, of a new servant-leader, of a new covenant, of a new epic drama. The core of it said that God had not abandoned this people. It said that God was coming to them anew, in fact, that God’s Kingdom had already come among them, and was going to remain.

God would come, not through power and conquest, but through the self-giving and suffering and death of the new servant-leader, through his obedience and his receptivity to God. Who was this person? In some ways he sounded like all Israel personified, in other ways he presented like a new person.

There was once a fulfillment of this prophecy. In the person of Jesus. In the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. The new leader of the prophecy is the dying-rising Jesus.

Theological insight – the filial life:

Some of us who think theologically have found ways to talk about this person, this Jesus. Jesus is the Son (of God). He becomes Son (of God) in resurrection. Resurrection is his being engendered by the Father. In that act he becomes fully what he always was. From the beginning he is Son born of the Father in the Spirit. In his whole life, and in his filial acceptance of his destiny, he becomes that more and more: he is always being engendered, he is always in the process of resurrection that will include and reverse and transcend death. His self-consciousness is always filial, always redemptive, and always increasing.

The Father delivered him, to engender him, to place him at the heart of everything. Death was ‘necessary’ as the scriptures say, so that Jesus could be in his whole filial being and – by sharing it with us - accomplish his saving mission. He had to die to let increase in him an unlimited space where the fullness of divinity could be conceived and received.

Literally the C.Ss.R.:

Redemption occurs, not in some act placed by Jesus, but in his very person in relation to God. The Holy Redeemer is more important than the mystery of the redemption. We are the congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer, in person. It is to him that we give our lives, for plentiful redemption.

It is right to celebrate the feast of this Person.

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