

*See, God is making all things new. Amen.*

“I was in the city of San Francisco, praying, and in a trance I saw a vision. There was something like a large sheet coming down from heaven, being lowered by its four corners; and it came close to me. As I looked at it closely I saw human beings in costumes of every kind, zombies, mermaids, and superheroes. I heard a voice saying to them, ‘get up, and run from the Embarcadero to Ocean Beach.’”

Happy Bay to Breakers Sunday! As a relatively new San Franciscan, it is my first time experiencing this particular expression of local culture and, I have to say, it feels a little like I might be in a trance...or still dreaming. This level of chaos and randomness is exactly the kind of thing my subconscious might conjure up. The veil between dream and reality feels particularly thin today - if thousands of people dressed as tacos and penguins can run freely through the streets of San Francisco, then what else could happen?

Perhaps you, like Peter in our reading from Acts this morning, have had an experience where the line between dreaming and real life starts to blur. Maybe it was a dream that felt so real, you woke up panicking that you really did forget to study for the exam, or you really were supposed to be on that 4:00 am flight to Sydney. Or maybe you had a waking experience so surreal, you had to pinch yourself to make sure you weren't still dreaming.

The boundary, the thin space between what is real and what is imagined (and I don't mean imaginary, as in fictitious), the boundary between what is actual and what is possible, is a very unnerving place to be. It is a place without landmarks, a space where the usual rules for how the world works don't apply. It is the realm of dreams and visions, which we sometimes glimpse

in transcendent moments of art and music. It is the Holy Spirit's very favorite place to dance in our lives.

And it is everywhere, surrounding us, in these Great 50 days of Easter, this blurring of distinctions, not just between what is and what could be, but of binaries of all kinds. Peter's vision in Acts is a prime example. Outwardly about the distinction between clean and unclean foods, it raised the question of whether Jewish dietary laws still needed to be observed in a young Church that was growing to include Gentiles as well as Jews. But the meaning of Peter's vision and the events that follow extend far beyond food, and point to a deeper question that we continue to struggle with today: what classes and categories of people do we see as unclean? Less than? Not worthy of a place at our table? And how do we treat those people when they come knocking on our doors?

The sheet in Peter's vision, full of the every imaginable kind of animal, clean and unclean all jumbled up together, is an evocative image of the holy, messy, radically inclusive community that God dreams for us. We catch a glimpse of it when Peter, prompted by the Spirit not to make distinctions, follows a group of Gentiles all the way to Caesarea, where he baptizes an entire household of new Christians. Rigid categories of clean and unclean, sacred and profane, Jew and Gentile are blurred by the hand of God. Suddenly, everyone is clean, everything has the potential to be holy, everything is made new. It takes Peter a minute to wrap his mind around this new reality but, to be honest, he recovers faster than I imagine I would. In this passage, we witness Peter's movement from an indignant, "by no means, Lord!" to a surprising stance of, "who am I that I can hinder God?"

Peter is swept up by the boundary-breaking grace of God - and we are invited to join him. Peter's conversion of heart raises a crucial question for us as the Church today: how do we react when the way we've understood and made sense of the world for our whole lives no longer applies? How do we respond when we are invited to risk vulnerability by opening our doors and our hearts wider, without knowing who all might wander in? How do we react when the entire rulebook suddenly gets thrown out the window?

Because, my friends, that is exactly what the Resurrection does. By rising from the grave, God in Christ is breaking all the rules and blurring the most fundamental binary that we live with: the distinction between life and death. The Risen Christ challenges the most basic assumption of how the world works: that dead people stay dead because death is final. Suddenly, with the Risen Christ wandering around Jerusalem, passing through closed doors, showing off his scars, cooking breakfast on the beach for his friends - anything seems possible.

And a world where anything is possible can be a very confusing and even threatening place. And when we are threatened, often, our first reaction is to retreat to safety. We make ourselves smaller, tighten the circle of who and what we let into our lives, and then, if necessary, we fight to defend our bastion of security. Fight or flight. We see this tendency at work across the globe, in the waves of xenophobia, white supremacy, and oppressive misogyny that are racking our world with violence rooted in fear - fear of the other and fear of scarcity. If everyone is welcome, if everyone is *equal*, then *will there be enough left for us?* Will we still matter? We fear what we might lose, what we might have to give up if we loosen our grip on the labels that define us, on the armor, the entrenched opinions that (we think!) will keep us safe.

The truth is, we will lose something in this new reality that God dreams for us, be it power, privilege, ego, or certainty. Resurrection does not happen without the Cross. But what we gain when we dare to look beyond divisive, narrow categories is beyond anything that our human minds can imagine. What we gain is nothing less than the dream of God, breaking into our world and flooding everything with light and grace. We see it in this dazzling promise in Revelation, where the heavenly Jerusalem descends from above and God's abiding presence with humankind is established forever. Where death, mourning, crying, and pain will cease to exist. Where the highest law will be the new commandment that Jesus gives his disciples, "that we love one another as Christ has loved us." Where no one is unclean and everyone belongs.

We're by no means there yet, but even in a world as full of brokenness as ours, we catch glimpses of this divine dream just as Peter did; swells of grace, love, and beauty that take our breath away and leave us hungry for more. We see a lot of them right here in this Cathedral. The groundwork has been laid in the Resurrection, and we are invited to participate in ushering in the fullness of God's dream. As we do that, we must ask ourselves: are our religious beliefs and moral values like a barbed wire fence, employing threats and fear to separate us from the unclean and dangerous other? Or are our values more like an open gate, urging us to push the boundaries of our imaginations and discover how what we label as "other," or "unclean" might show us the face of God in fresh ways. After all, "what God has called clean, we must not call profane."

In this season of Easter, we are invited to make God's dream our own. To partner with our God, who longs to erase the human divisions that keep us isolated and afraid and usher in a new order of grace and love. To let the power of the Resurrection soften the prejudices and fears that keep us small and open our hearts to the wild inclusivity of our God. In God's dream of

enormous possibility, what will we dare to create? Who will we dare to include? Where will we let the Holy Spirit dance in our lives? See - God is, at this very moment, making all things new - beginning with us. *Amen.*