

“Easter Sunday” – Reverend Jennifer Adams
April 4, 2010

In her Easter letter to our Church our Presiding Bishop, Katharine Jefferts Schori talked about Lenten observance in the Episcopal Diocese of Haiti and how as you can only imagine, their approach was a little different this year than usual.

First a little background. One of the things that traditionally happens during the season of Lent is that we put away our Alleluias. There are actually some wonderful kids lessons where they make a big paper Alleluia and tuck it away in a box not to be opened again until Easter morning a physical way of acknowledging what we do with our prayers throughout Lent. Through that season we don't sing any Alleluias or pray any Alleluias for the entire 40 days and 40 nights. In fact, in our Book of Common Prayer when there is an Alleluia printed, there is also a subtle rubrical reminder that accompanies it which says, “except in the season of Lent.”

So one of our common Lenten disciplines, throughout the Church is holding our Alleluia tongues and waiting for Easter morning to let the Alleluias fly once again. And we share this common practice with those around the Anglican Communion and in various other liturgical traditions as well. But in Haiti this year, which is actually the largest diocese in the Episcopal Church, they did something different. The Bishop there, said that the people of Haiti actually needed to use Lent to practice saying Alleluia, so that when Easter came they'd stand a chance of genuinely celebrating resurrection.

Because in Haiti, their alleluias had already been boxed up, broken up, shaken up, torn up and buried for weeks by the time Lent began. So the discipline of the season in that Diocese, instead of hiding the Alleluias became a practice of rediscovering and reclaiming the possibility for joy. Over their heads in rubble, carrying the burden of centuries of slavery, oppression, invasion and corruption the Episcopal people of Haiti have been practicing praying, singing, and being an Easter Alleluia.

And so in a beautiful way that speaks something about holiness, the Diocese of Haiti leads our larger Church this morning in our celebration of resurrection. They've been at this work of rising for weeks now and while there is a long way to go, and it will still take the world to help them heal, they are finding new life in the midst of struggle and death. Which is of course, what this day, this season, our faith is all about.

Now my experience is that while most of us in this part of the world never or have rarely experienced the level of ongoing, pervasive hardship and poverty lived in Haiti, we aren't necessarily any more practiced in our ability to shape our lives around the promise that new life will come. We aren't any more oriented toward that expectation than the people of Haiti are and in fact we might be less so. We're up against things like apathy, numbness and cynicism; we live amidst overabundance, imbalance, busy-ness, injustices and the not-necessarily enviable ability to ignore the tremendous human need that lives right down the street or that we experience in our own lives. And so as we unravel our Alleuias this morning we should be aware that right here in this time and in this place we need practice too. We need to visit the

tomb and hear all of this as an opportunity to re-orient ourselves toward the promise and hope of new life.

And so one of the first things we'll do is baptize into the death and resurrection of Christ. We'll celebrate new life, new faith among us in Markko Foster and we'll support his family in the vows they take this morning and renew the promises made at our own baptisms. Then we'll feast and celebrate and we'll see that sometimes Alleluia takes the shape of a table where all are welcome and there is more than enough forgiveness and love to go around.

Then we'll be sent out into the world with the good news that Christ is Risen and, challenged to make Alleluia our way out there. To roll away the stones inside of ourselves, to visit the tombs of our world and put our energies and efforts into what may seem like impossible sorts of healings and hopings and wholenesses. Led by those who hunger for nothing less than resurrection life, we stand in the rubble with the people of Haiti, the suffering of our world, we stand in the midst of our own broken places and we forge Alleluia ways. Placing our lives in the presence of a miracle, knowing since that very first Easter morning, that nothing else ultimately stands a chance.