

1180
1419
2098

This Joyful Evoltuion (HTV E. 1126)

Have Dies [DEC. 0-20]

Christus Resurgens EASTER PREFACE

('Resurrexi')

Alleluia: Sursum

[Eranam #10]

Midday Prayers - 620

20.4.78
4.5.81
14.5.84
6.5.93

Each year, around this time, you can hear in the ^{in Cath. churches} gospel readings of the Sunday liturgy. parts of the 10th chapter of St John's gospel - it's the chapter in which Christ speaks of Himself as the 'Good Shepherd', and uses other imagery too about Himself and those who would follow Him. One of the more fascinating and controversial of these images is surely when He calls Himself the gate of the sheepfold. Positively, a gate promises access: it welcomes. A gate hints at what might be within: it makes us curious. But negatively, a gate claims legitimacy in a way that makes those who ignore it fraudulent and suspect. A gate is a kind of check-point, where selectivity is exercised. We are asked at many gates in our lives: 'what is the purpose of your visit?' Suppose we have no answer.... And then we know (with Kierkegaard) that many gates in life do not swing inward, so that we can force them; they swing outward, and therefore we can do nothing.

To apply this image of 'gate' to oneself seems the height of vanity. Yet the scandal of Jesus lies in such a claim to uniqueness that He makes for Himself. If someone says "I did it my way", we all applaud. If someone says "Do it my way", we recoil. ^(to break someone's door & walk out of it) These days there is renewed interest in the variety of religious experience, so any claim to uniqueness is a constant source of confusion to people of good will. ^{people still} Learned societies struggle with this question, not without much mumble and fog. ^{trying} They try to isolate what makes morality specifically Christian. They try to see how Christian community

and identity differ from other traditional wisdoms. Sometimes there is a hint of an inferiority complex in these reflections, the fear of saying one's differences out loud. On the other hand, it is difficult simply to say that Jesus is important because of His connections, and to leave it at that. It makes it look as though God operates on a who-you-know basis, apart from what Jesus might be doing that is worth learning in itself and for itself. When on the day of Pentecost (according to the Acts of the Apostles) Peter stood up and addressed the crowd, he used (it says) many other arguments in support of his testimony. What those were, we don't know. But if they all touched upon only the person of Jesus and not upon His characteristic way of acting, then we might wonder how persuasive they would have been. In the N.T. 1st Letter of Peter, two reasons are indicated why Jesus is preached not simply as a person who matters, but also as someone who has something to say about life. First is that Jesus "carries" many burdens that are not properly His own. It is a common human experience. Nowhere do feelings of unfairness well up more strongly than when people feel they are being dumped upon indiscriminately by others. Some people carry the weight of the world on their shoulders without knowing how it got there. But Jesus probably knew why. He carries around the sins of others in His own person. He shoulders the emotional burden of strained or broken or nonexistent relationships. He takes it, and takes it on. He gets the kind of flack that God gets, the accusations, curses and indifference. Reflect on this for a while now, literally to some

L'Opis (E) 50
2³²
DER-E-10

HTV E

130

music for today: "You see" ^{the} Jesus

Now the Green Blade Rises ^{2 pieces} for a Sanctus - Benedictus
Next, the Easter hymn "Alleluia psalter"

Lift up your heads, O ye Saints of God
MUSIC - PRAYERS
- A 2nd of pt of e. B.

A second point from St Peter's letter is that Jesus avoids the trap of making final judgements about people: "In just this way, He left you an example, to have you follow in His footsteps. He did no wrong; no deceit was found in His mouth. When He was insulted, He returned no insult. When He was made to suffer, He did not counter with threats." There is more to this behaviour than meets the eye. We know how people carp at their fate, resenting this turn or that in their affairs. We squirm over hurts that we have internalised and totalled up.

But the attitude of Jesus is free of such pettiness. There is a resolute decision to be finally judged by the One He loves, and never to suspect that person to be the cause of His suffering. Trust has to be exercised in the midst of what actually happens in our lives, with all its actual limitations, excursions & adventures. Rather than being so much in charge of events, the Scripture says of Jesus "He delivered Himself up to the One who judges justly."

So a picture emerges of someone who is unique by being so very, very human. In the opening of the gospel, Jesus is the gate that defends us from thieves & marauders who invite us to other expectations about our humanity: the people who steal from us our hope of coping with frailty within and around us, the people who call us to the same violent condemnation of others that they indulge in, the people who look out for themselves and have no compassion. These people are strangers to our humanity. They actually believe we are sheep; but at least Jesus credits sheep with having some discrimination.