

## **Messy, Joyful Easter**

I woke from a fitful sleep, jet-lagged and already critical of the things that awaited me at morning Mass. I countered with a prayer for humility and tolerance of things I dislike like dour congregants and uninspiring music. After all, it is Easter! Jesus is walking through walls and telling folks to get their hands off Him then insisting that they lay hands on Him—all kinds of messy, unpredictable stuff.

I cringed slightly as I eyed the cantor for the morn; golden in her intentions, her voice hurts me. As she geared up for the processional hymn, she appeared shaken like a diver peering into the pool below and realizing it may not be deep enough. But she soldiered on and was soon joined by the booming off-key voice of a visiting pastor whose joy in serving us that morning overtook all else.

His sheer exuberance invited us all in to celebrate: Jesus is alive, and that changes everything. Like my critical spirit. Listening to cantor and pastor make a joyful noise at once delighted and convicted me. God is so much bigger than my snide critique. He wants to blow open our defenses, walk through our walls, and rouse us to cooperate with Him in dissolving others' defenses against the Holy One.

The pastor grinned from ear-to-ear as he showered us with the waters of cleansing (a cool Catholic thing for the several Sundays of Easter); I obviously needed to renew my baptismal vows that Sunday! And I found that if I sang along with the cantor during the offertory I could not afford to be critical of her. The pastor sermonized powerfully on how community is essentially for grasping the hope of new life—we behold the glorified One together. I was proud to be there.

I left Church joyful, expectant. I wanted to give new life away. Later on I ran into a guy whom I had met a few years back. At that time he announced to me rather arrogantly that he was a 'gay Christian' with a new boyfriend. Things had gone badly for him: I could tell from his few words and demeanor that he was suffering. Though he did not recognize me at first, I did him and I told him specific things I had not ceased praying for him in the last five years. He was speechless and teary-eyed.

Messy, joyful Jesus is on the move. Walk through walls with Him. It is Easter and that changes everything.