

May 7, 2006

SUNDAY: Easter 3 (Confirmation)

HOMILY: Just Say Yes (Pt. 1)

Text: 1 Corinthians 12

2006 Mary E. Beard

As parents we sing that hymn (*I Was There to Hear Your Borning Cry*, #351 *New Century Hymnal*) thinking of ourselves as the “I” who was there at the borning cry. Yet, we know that we can’t and we won’t always be there. We live in the trust and the promise that there is one who is there from borning cry till the shutting of the weary eyes – the living God.

We are here today because of God’s “yes” to live and love. Last week we remembered and celebrated God’s joyous “yes” for all of creation – that indeed it is very good. Today we remember that each person comes into life with God’s “yes” imprinted on their soul.

When we bring our children to baptism, we are saying “yes” to God’s “yes.” At that time, the congregation affirms that they will offer their love, support, and care for the one to be baptized.

Thank you for all the ways you have loved, supported and cared for these young people through this past year and through all the years they have participated in the life of this congregation.

Today is the confirmands’ opportunity to say “YES” to God’s love and to their commitment to follow in the way of Jesus through the life of the church.

You won’t be surprised that there is an opportunity for all of us to say, “Yes,” for each young person today. There are many ways to say yes – high five, handshake, slap on the back, fist pulled into body... However, today we will use a word that is deeply embedded in the traditions

of the church. We will use, “amen.”

Often we use “Amen” as if it means “the end.” We get to the end of a prayer and the person praying says, “Amen.” But actually the word “amen” is a response, meaning “so be it.” Or “yes.”

Therefore, in the act of confirmation, when each confirmand kneels and either Larry or I say,

O God, in the grace of Jesus Christ

You have claimed_ this person___ through the waters of baptism. Nourish in him/her the power of your Holy Spirit that s/he may serve you in the world.

Then we invite you to respond with,

AMEN!

HOMILY: Just Say ‘Yes!’ (Pt. 2)

Text(s): 1 Corinthians 12

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Mary has just reminded us all that we are here in this community of faith, primarily because others have said “Yes” to us or for us. God, our parents or other family members, pastors and Sunday School teachers, and many more have affirmed us as people of sacred worth, as children of God.

But we’re also here because we have said “Yes,” too. Confirmation is one of those times when we say our own ‘Yes’ as a response to the ‘yes’s’ that have been said to us by God and parents and church school teachers and others who love us.

The ‘Yes’ that we say at confirmation, or at any other point in our lives when we feel the call to respond, is always an open-ended one. It’s not the final ‘yes’ that we will ever need to say. The Christian life is a journey, and there are opportunities all along the way to respond to God’s Spirit. The ‘yes’ that you confirmands are

saying today doesn't mean that all your questions have been answered. It doesn't mean you will never have intellectual or spiritual doubts. It doesn't mean that you will never feel angry or discouraged or bored with the church. You are saying 'Yes' on the basis of what you can commit yourselves to now and what you may yet become as you follow Jesus Christ.

The 'Yes' that we say in confirmation is especially important because it is a commitment to being part of a particular community of faith and to a particular way of being in relationship with others and to a particular way of acting in the world. It's a 'yes' to being the church.

The church is unique community, as St. Paul reminds us very graphically: "*Now you* (the 'you' is plural—you the whole congregation and the whole church around the world)— you *are the body of Christ, and individually members of it.*" Paul believed that the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead was the beginning of a whole new humanity, a whole new creation. The local congregation is where the world should be able to see the risen Christ. The world should be able to look at the church and see a new way for humans to live together. And that makes the church a different kind of community from other communities that we belong to. It makes us different as individuals when we're part of it.

Remember the song Kermit the Frog and the Muppets made famous—*It's Not Easy Being Green?* Well, in a real sense, being a Christian is a call to be green in a world where there are many more flashy and bright colors to choose from. But green is the color of resurrection, of new life. Look at the leaves of all the trees that are bursting into new life after the sleep of winter.

The church is the community of people, who by the way they live together in love and compassion and justice are a sign of God's new life, God's new creation. Do we always look like that? Are we always faithful to that call? No, of course not. We're not perfect. . . yet. But

learning to live in perfect love toward one another is really what we're all about. It's the goal toward which we're moving. We make a covenant together to live together and talk together and work together in certain ways that are different from the ways human beings often relate to one another.

To be a "green" church means that we say 'yes' to each person's unique gifts that they bring to be used for the common good. Every body needs all its parts to function properly. And none of us by ourselves has all the gifts and graces necessary to be the whole body. To work for the common good means we honor and celebrate the diversity of gifts and graces that each of us is given by the Spirit, so that all of us together are more than any of us can be alone.

That's really why we gather for worship each week, and why it's so important that we do. It's our way of saying, "Yes, I want to be part of the new humanity that God is creating. I want to offer my gifts so that together, we can model a new way for human beings to relate to one another based on love, mutual respect, and justice instead of the usual ways that are based on social status, wealth, power, and competition and exclusion." I hope that part of the 'Yes' that each of you confirmands is saying today is a commitment to really be present in and to this particular community of faith and to bring your own unique gifts to be used for the common good of all of us. We need you— your energy, your questions, your enthusiasm for life, your optimism for the future. And you need us— you need the wisdom and history and the steadiness that we have accumulated through the years.

When we commit ourselves to saying 'yes' to the variety of gifts and the differences we bring to the table, then we really are beginning to become that new humanity that God is creating. We're the sign of the new creation. We enable the world to begin to hear God's own 'Yes' to the whole creation. We become a sign of hope.