

I was visiting with a friend this week about fatherhood. He is a grandfather now, and of course I have no children of my own. He said years ago he was happy to get married, but he was nervous about becoming a father. He thought he wouldn't know what to do, he would fail to love the way a father should, and he was in for a disappointing experience. But miracles happen. He said that when his wife gave birth to a child, the child gave birth to a father. He was suddenly transformed into everything a father could be. He said marriage changes your life, but having children changes it much more. God can transform people. You may not even know you have something in you, but God can pull it out.

Easter celebrates transformation. God transformed Jesus from death into life. During his final days, his enemies wanted to make sure that Jesus didn't have a chance to do anything special. They failed. They put him to death, but God transformed him. Today's responsorial psalm captures the essence of what happened. One of the verses says, "The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone." A stone that professionals thought was not strong enough to be used anywhere in the structure, was wedged into place as the very foundation upon which the entire building rested. That was Jesus, rejected by authorities who thought he was worthless to their plans, but who was really the one they needed to succeed. He wanted to transform them.

Jesus wanted to transform everyone, and the news this week would make you think he even transformed the man who betrayed him. Archeologists just announced that they have uncovered a manuscript they're calling the Gospel of Judas. They say it was written by the fourth century, and it tells about a special friendship between Jesus and Judas. It says that Jesus asked Judas to arrange for his death. Now the media are trying to give the impression that Christians have been wrong for 2000 years, and Judas wasn't such a bad guy after all.

Well, I doubt it. The text they have was written at least 200 years after Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. A lot of us cannot report something accurately 20 minutes after it happened. Two hundred years from now someone could write a book about the great friendship between President George W. Bush and Saddam Hussein. It doesn't mean that it was true.

In any event, it's nice to think that anyone, even Judas, has a second chance. It's nice to think that somehow we can be transformed by a good Lent or the birth of a child. Easter celebrates transformation. It transforms us from sin to grace. If it cannot transform other people who betray us or annoy us, it may change how we think about them; it can transform us from people who avoid our enemies into people who tolerate them, maybe even into people who love them. Above all Easter brings hope that at the end of our days, we shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord. Jesus is risen. He is transformed. And he transforms us from sin to grace and from death to life.