

A few months ago an old friend of mine died, Father Jim Lyons. He had already retired when I went to St. Regis in Kansas City years ago, but he still celebrated mass on Sundays. I like to think that my homilies are short, but Jim's were always about half the length of mine. He would tell a quick story, draw a conclusion, and that was it. Our diocesan newspaper is reprinting some of his talks about once a month. They're only a couple paragraphs long. They look like excerpts, but they're not. They're the entire homily. People loved listening to Fr. Lyons because they remembered what he said. They could tell other people what he preached, often word for word. Jim spoke so well that his message kept going out through other people.

We love to retell stories. In your family if somebody does something silly or says something wise, you tell the story again and again in a few sentences. You never get tired of it.

This is what the Church hopes will happen at Easter. The news that Jesus is risen is told very briefly in the bible, so people can keep telling it to others from one generation to the next.

Peter tells this story in today's first reading. He is visiting Cornelius, a Gentile who wants to learn about Christ. Peter gets the attention of the household, and he makes this speech. He says Jesus was baptized by John in Galilee; he went about doing good and healed those oppressed by the devil; enemies put him to death in Jerusalem; God raised him on the third day; and he was seen by people who had witnessed what he did in life, and ate and drank with him after he died. In those few phrases, Peter sums up the whole gospel. He did it in a way that people could remember and tell the story to others.

My brothers and sisters, Jesus is risen. He appears to us in many ways – in the eucharist, in the bible, and in this community of believers. Jesus is risen, and Jesus is here.

This Easter Day we give thanks to God for the life, death and resurrection of Christ. Let us recommit ourselves to telling his story. In the words we speak and the deeds we do, let us proclaim Christ. Let us avoid what keeps us from him: our impatience with people we love, our negligence of prayer, and our cowardice in the presence of less virtuous peers. Let us remember Jesus: his kindness to the needy, his boldness under trial, and his trust in the Father. Let us carry the spirit of this day to all that we meet, and never tire of telling the story.