

## 6 Easter, Year C

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Acts 16:9-15

Psalm 67

Revelation 21:10,22—22:5

John 14:23-29

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Almost thirteen years ago,  
St. Anne's took a huge risk . . .  
I would say one of the *biggest* risks  
in its one-hundred-and-eleven-year history.

At the time, things here were tough.  
There are stories about how  
the wardens, treasurer, and secretary  
would stand each month  
with the bills in their hands,  
trying to decide which ones  
the church could afford to pay.

Meanwhile,  
at the exact same time,  
a *very* young priest  
just three years out of seminary  
was working as a college chaplain in Statesboro.

He and his young wife had started a family,  
and though they loved the people they were with,  
they knew deep down  
it was time for a change.

Afraid of change, however,  
that young priest often thought,  
“But where could I possibly go?  
I'm too young to be a rector.”

Then one night on a whim—  
or maybe by a nudge of the Holy Spirit—  
he picked up the phone and called  
the parents of his old friend Alice.

Alice's mother Jeannie Rigdon  
answered the phone, “Hello?”

“Hi Jeannie, this is Lonnie Lacy.”

“Well Lonnie Lacy, how *are* you!?”

“Uh, I’m fine. I hope you and Steve are, too.  
Hey, didn’t I hear a while back that  
y’all are still looking for a priest at St. Anne’s?”

Jeannie Rigdon got quiet, and then,  
in her Jeannie way, she said:  
“Well now, *this* is an interesting  
conversation to be having.”

In time,  
more conversations were had.  
People were met.  
Prayers were said.  
And lo and behold  
in the summer of 2009,  
you called as your new rector  
*this guy*. ➡



(Those glasses  
were cool in 2009,  
by the way.)

I say it was a risk  
because on paper,  
it made no sense.

On paper,  
an inexperienced,  
teenage-looking priest—  
whose only job so far  
had been youth and college ministry—  
had no business being given the keys  
to one of the Diocese of Georgia’s  
most treasured and storied parishes.

For the record,  
*I* thought y’all were crazy,  
but I needed a job,  
so I kept my mouth shut.

I will never forget the night  
a few months after I had arrived  
when Roy Rankin and I  
drove over to Albany for the installation  
of St. Patrick’s new rector.

As we drove back,  
Roy said, “Did you know that new rector

is only *thirty-two* years old? That's too young!"  
"Roy," I said, "I'm twenty-nine,"  
"Well . . ." he said,  
"*That's different!*"

I say it was a risk,  
and in the way that  
*all* good things are a risk,  
it was.

But we know it was more than that, don't we?  
Looking back, we know that  
even as y'all were  
wondering,  
worrying,  
looking,  
discerning,  
praying . . .

*I* was also  
wondering,  
worrying,  
looking,  
discerning,  
praying . . .

and far more importantly,  
*the Holy Spirit* was  
moving,  
preparing,  
teaching,  
forming,  
readying,  
connecting,  
calling.

I say it was a risk,  
but really, it was the Holy Spirit.  
We didn't do any of this.

All we did was say yes  
when the Holy Spirit  
showed us the way.

\* \* \*

In today's gospel,  
Jesus is preparing his disciples  
for the fact that he, too, will soon leave them.

Can you imagine  
what that would have been like?  
It's one thing to lose a rector you sort of like;  
it's a whole other thing to lose Jesus.

He had come back from the dead,  
and everything was so full of hope.  
Everything was brand new.  
Life was good,  
and the disciples probably thought  
it would stay that way forever.

But even with Jesus,  
there are still endings and new beginnings.

Pay attention to the promise he makes:  
"I have said these things to you  
while I am still with you.  
But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit,  
whom the Father will send in my name,  
will teach you everything,  
and remind you of all that I have said."

For us who love the Lord Jesus,  
there is never a departure,  
never a loss,  
never a change or transition  
where the Holy Spirit  
is not already on the scene  
moving,  
preparing,  
teaching,  
forming,  
readying,  
connecting,  
calling.

As I've said to you many times before,  
either we believe this stuff,  
or we don't.

\* \* \*

So . . . yes . . .  
after thirteen wonderful years  
I am leaving St. Anne's.

It is not easy,  
but it is time.

In recent months,  
the Holy Spirit has shown me  
one thing after another—  
loose ends that have finally been tied up,  
dreams we've long held at St. Anne's  
that have finally come true—  
all as if to say,  
“Look. This church is strong.  
They are going to be okay.  
*It is time.*”

That's the funny, beautiful thing about *call*.

The Holy Spirit never  
calls one person to something new  
at the expense of another.  
If this call is genuine and true—  
if God really has wonderful things in store  
for the Lacys and for the people  
whom we will serve next—  
then God has wonderful things  
in store for St. Anne's, too.

As an old friend of mine likes to say,  
“God ain't about to let you be no fatherless child.”

\* \* \*

In the meantime,  
it still hurts,  
and it's still hard.

So today, if you are mad, be mad,  
but don't stay mad forever.

If you are sad, be sad,  
but don't stay sad forever.

(And if you're one of the ones  
who's downright delighted about all this,

well . . . God bless you.  
I'm glad I finally found a way to make you happy! 😊)

We are blessed with a month ahead of us,  
a month of much love,  
of many blessings,  
and of good goodbyes.

Let's make the absolute most of it.

In the meantime,  
hold onto the Holy Spirit,  
and never forget that  
it's times like this when  
the Spirit is already on the scene  
moving,  
preparing,  
teaching,  
forming,  
readying,  
connecting,  
*calling.*

Jesus promised it,  
so it must be true.

Amen.