



April 10, 2011 The Fifth Sunday of Lent

I am the resurrection and the life: whosoever believes in me, though they should die, will come to life; and whosoever is alive and believes in me will never die.—John 11:25

Dear Friends;

This past week there was an article (in the Contra Costa Times) about a young man, John Maloof, who at an estate sale came across a treasure trove of photos and undeveloped film—numbering in the tens of thousands. Photos ranging from the late 1940's to the 1990's. They were the work of an unknown genius—Vivian Maier.

Vivian had photographed (mostly in black and white) everyday life in Chicago—the poor, women, and children. Her photos included street scenes and found beauty even in graffiti and garbage. Her work included things that had been overlooked by the famous photographers of the 50's and 60's.

Maloof was able to find out Vivian's name from items identified in a trunk. But he did not know who she was nor did anyone else. So he set out in search of her. He came across her obituary in the Chicago Tribune discovering that she had died just days before in April of 2009. From the article he was to uncover who she was.

Vivian was born of immigrant parents in New York City. Her father was Austrian and her mother was French. Vivian was a quiet woman who had served as a nanny to many well-healed Chicago families. She was very good with children. She was very creative putting on plays with the neighborhood children. She had never married or had children of her own. In every free moment she traveled about the city with camera around her neck and photographed what she saw.

Being very private no one saw the treasury of images that she captured. But since her death her photos have been viewed in exhibitions in Europe and now in Chicago. In a real sense she lives on in her work. And the lives of those she photographed live on her work. In a marvelous way this woman's life has intensified since her death. And her life continues to have value and gives meaning to us who never knew her.

For Jesus, life and death are attitudes, faith stances. For those who love there is no death. And that joy of life and living that are gifts from God transcend time and space. Death is the inability to see the intrinsic value of our lives and all things. Death is the inability to connect with oneself, others and God. Death only knows disconnection.

Jesus came to tell us that our lives are supremely important. We are loved by God. God's love will never forget us. We may never know who we may have touched in this life and made a difference. We may have no idea how our lives will keep on giving after we are long gone. Yet Jesus assures us God knows and God will not forget. And in the resurrection from the dead we will be unbound like Lazarus and will be free to be known and loved forever.

This wonderful life that we have from God needs to be nurtured, respected and treasured. And this same gift we need to treasure in others—especially the poor, the vulnerable, the unborn, those condemned to death and those threatened by war, violence, disease and famine. Everyone and everything is precious. So let us like Vivian and like Jesus see that gift all around and hold it close.

Peace,

Fr Ron