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Easter Vigil

Genesis 1-2; Genesis 7-9; Exodus 14; John 20

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1994. Burke, VA. I was working toward my second-degree green belt in Tae Kwon Do. My sensei, Master Khan, gave me some words of wisdom that I'll never forget. "Where your head leads," he said, "your body follows." That advice was enough to make my punches pack—well—more punch, and even get a leg up on my kicks. Wherever I wanted to point my moves, I would first consciously turn my head in that direction now confident that my body would follow right behind.

Little did he know, but Master Khan shared with me a bit of Christian doctrine that day. I mean, it's true, isn't it?—Where the head leads, the body follows. Take this for example—if I asked you who the granddaddy of us all was, the head of the whole human family, who would you say? You'd probably say Adam, right? He was the first man ever, and being fruitful and multiplying, he is the head of all people, which means that we, in a way, are his body. We all share ten fingers and ten toes just like Adam, two eyes, two ears, a mouth, and a nose. We all pretty much take after him in every way.

The trouble is, that's not the only thing that's hereditary. Like father, like sons—we all sin just like him, which means one day, also like him, from dust we came and to dust we shall return. That is the legacy he has passed down to us, our sad inheritance. Where Adam, our head, has gone, you and I, his body, will follow.

But what if, instead, we all got a *good* head on our shoulders? Not Adam who leads us into the grave, but a New Adam who can lead us out of it? Well, tonight we heard about a different Head, a new one who is pulling us all in a new direction. He's the one who spearheaded God's plan back in the beginning of creating the heavens and the earth. He's the one who kept Noah's head above water, bringing him and his family, eight souls in all, safely through water. He's also the one who went to the head of the line to lead His people Israel through the Red Sea on dry ground, saving them from the Egyptians.

But He's also the one who's headed up a new rescue mission, a special operation that includes you and me. He became conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary, so that He could become human, like each of us. He then suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried to go where one day you and I will have to go. But, when He did, something happened, He broke through that dead end, and everything changed.

Like He did in the beginning, He spearheaded a new creation project, making a *new* heaven and a *new* earth—a new US! Like Noah, He's kept our heads above trouble and will bring us safely through the grave. And like the Israelites at the Red Sea, He's at the head of the line leading us to heaven's Promised Land, while destroying our enemies of sin and death. See, already tonight we celebrate our new Adam, our new Head, the new father of a new humanity, who has taken charge of us and our condition. This night, Jesus has poked His head out of the tomb, rolled away the stone, and cleared the way for us to follow Him out of death and into eternal life!

We all heard St. Paul tonight—"Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? We were buried therefore with Him by Baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life." When you and I were baptized into Christ, we were poured into Him, which means we are now in Christ. It's no wonder then that we, the Church, are called His Body—since we are *in Him*! And as His Body, what goes for Jesus our Head, goes for us. He was crucified, so in Him our sinful selves have been crucified. He was buried, so in Him we have already died. He was raised from the tomb, and so we all have—*every single one of us* has—new resurrection life! As Master Khan said, "Where the head leads, the body follows." Christ, our Head, is risen! And so we will most certainly follow after Him!

I dunno, maybe Luther also took a class with Master Khan, because just listen to this. Luther says, “Christ, [your] head, has arisen. But now that the Head is seated on high and lives, there is no longer any reason for concern. [You] who cling to Him must also follow after Him as His Body and members. For where the Head goes and abides, there the Body with all the members must necessarily follow and abide. As in the birth of man and of all animals, the head naturally appears first, and after this is born, the whole body follows easily. Now since Christ has passed over and reigns above in heaven over sin, death, devil, and everything, and since He did this for [your] sake to draw [you] after Him, [you] need no longer worry about [your] resurrection and life, though [you] depart and rot in the ground. For now this is no more than a sleep. And for Christ it is but a night before He rouses [you] from . . . sleep.” Luther closes by saying, “all the hold death still has on [you] is but a small toe!” (AE28:110)

Ladies and gentlemen, tonight let us celebrate that all death can do is pinch our pinky toe—it has no hold on us! Because you and I are Christ’s Body, and He our head has risen victorious, we all know exactly where we’re headed—we shouldn’t waste any more time worrying about death. We have better plans, better places to be, better things to go and do than play dead! Thanks to our resurrected Lord, the toehold of death is losing its grip on us, just as it did on Him. After all, “Where the head leads, the body follows.”

So, say it with me—“Alleluia! Christ is risen!”

“He is risen indeed. Alleluia!”

Which means YOU are risen! YOU are risen indeed! Alleluia!