



Son Rise Service

I love watching the sunset, especially over water.

The sunrise is a totally different story...I would enjoy it a lot more if it didn't occur so early in the morning! But there is something about rising before the sun on Easter morning to join fellow believers in the most special ceremonious celebration of the Christian faith that adds to the attraction!

I stayed on the mainland this year, and attended my home church for the first time since I don't even remember...we have made a tradition of being at the beach for Easter and have enjoyed attending the sunrise service at Soundside Park. Last year when we got home about the time traditional service starts, I realized how much I missed the sacred sensory experience of the celebratory service in the sanctuary.

This year was different for many reasons. We stayed in town to celebrate with my niece and her husband as they renewed their wedding vows after surviving her brain surgery. My dear friend, Mr. Jones, turned 90 on Easter, so we joined his bountiful Birthday bash after attending two separate services on Sunday. Throw in lunch with my husband's family and it made for a very full day...nothing like my previous years of long lazy days lounging on the beach.

The Sunrise service was awesome, and a very different experience than the one at the beach. I was actually quite surprised to see so many people on the road as we traveled to church in the dark. I could see the crescent moon rising to my left, and the flames from the fire barrel to my right, as we gathered under the portico in front of the memorial gardens. The sermon was short and sweet, based a child's literal version of the Lord's Prayer: 'Our father, who art in heaven, how do you know my name?' We were reminded that God knows each of us intimately, and calls us each by name to be in His service through use of our own special gifts. That has special significance to me, being a woman with dual identities: I know He knows both my names, and the unique nature and origin of each!

I had to listen carefully to hear the minister's words over the sound of chirping birds. I envisioned the sound of distant traffic as the roar of crashing waves on the beach. Combined with the beautiful vegetation, it reminded me of being on the beach in Barbados.

.Following communion, we were invited to stroll through the garden, where a statue of St Francis stood among the Dogwoods, red buds and blooming bulbs. The paths were lined with well established azaleas with large buds about to burst into bloom.

Thanks heaven the Methodist Men were serving breakfast between services since we had agreed to share child duty before and during the traditional 8:30 service... We arrived in the multipurpose room (aka former sanctuary) just in time to see the sun actually rising over the trees from behind the



church. The sky was painted with pastel hues of purple and pink, that faded slowly as the sun grew bigger and brighter. By the time we took a short walk through the woods, we were covered in pollen and ready to retreat indoors.

We were in the sanctuary by 8:00 am, attached our flowers to the living cross and started coloring and chasing children. The opening hymn, Christ the Lord has Risen Today, complete with organ and trumpet fanfare, felt very different than our earlier a capello version. The young disciple's portion of the service was even more humorous than usual, with all the little ones dressed in their Easter attire, beaming and bulging with news of Easter adventures.

The sermon was not so short this time, but sweet, citing yet another child's verbal interpretation of a popular scripture...God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten son, so that anyone who believes in Him shall have ever laughing life! Spending time with Mr. Jones and his family was confirmation of this timeless truth!

And the grand finale was well worth the wait! Eager members of the congregation clamored to join the choir in a stirring rendition of the Alleluia chorus. The excitement and anticipation was palpable as the brass band and organ joined in jubilee. The 'Amens' that came afterwards were surprisingly spontaneous.

Yes indeed, our Lord has risen, and He calls each of us by name, giving true meaning to Son Rise Service! May you experience ever laughing life!

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