



April 23, 2023 – Easter 3 (A)
Week 3: Reflections on the Resurrection

During the Easter season, Sermons That Work is pleased to present reflections from some of the newest bishops of The Episcopal Church on the resurrection of our Lord. Check back each week for a brief exploration of how Jesus Christ's rising from the grave changes everything. To listen to this reflection, scan the QR code on this page and subscribe to the Sermons That Work podcast.

On December 30, the church celebrates the feast day of the Blessed Frances Joseph-Gaudet. Ms. Gaudet, the daughter of an enslaved man, was born in 1861 in a log cabin in Pike County, Mississippi. After moving to New Orleans to attend college, Ms. Gaudet became a significant philanthropist at the turn of the century. She is known as a prison reformer, missionary, advocate, and educator. With her determined spirit, she provided leadership that bridged diverse segments of society to affect social change. The Gaudet Normal and Industrial School of Black Youth was known for its academic excellence. In addition to many other social reforms, Ms. Gaudet was also the driving force behind the establishment of the first juvenile court in New Orleans.

In this Easter season, as the light of the Paschal candle burns brightly, I reflect upon the ministry of this incredible woman who worked relentlessly to better the lives of those in her community. Throughout her life, she knew that faith could not be practiced in the dark. She made the hard choices that came with sitting with those in need and wrestling with tough questions about who we are and how we are to engage the Gospel in a broken world. She lived her life holding true to the tenet that the world desperately needs us to be harbingers of the light, because it just might be the only light that someone will experience. Luke 12 reminds us: "Whatever you have said in the dark will be heard in the light, and what you have whispered behind closed doors will be proclaimed from the housetops." What an incredible responsibility we are called to as Christians!

I believe that it takes both courage and vulnerability to be able to step into the light and be this light for others. Jesus is clear that those who find their life will lose it and those who lose their life for his sake will find it. In addition, we also hold tightly to the charge to be bold in our faith and to let die those things that keep us from fully committing ourselves to the work of God. And, in the end, the life and light will come. How do we do this? This Easter season reminds us that each day presents a choice and that the cycle of death and resurrection is continuous and profound. Every moment is an opportunity. In this journey, we are to be strong and courageous, for the Lord our God is with us wherever we go. Darkness, light, or even in-between, we are God's, and we are never outside of God's grasp.

Today, the legacy of Blessed Frances Joseph-Gaudet continues in the Episcopal Diocese of Louisiana. Funds are administered yearly through the Gaudet Scholarship Program as well as for other grant programs benefiting underserved children and families in the New Orleans and Baton Rouge areas. In this Easter season, I pray that I may live like Ms. Gaudet.



***The Rt. Rev. Shannon Rogers Duckworth** was ordained and consecrated on November 19, 2022, as the 12th bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Louisiana. A 2001 graduate of The General Theological Seminary, Bishop Duckworth served in the Diocese of Mississippi until her call in 2013 as canon to the ordinary to the Rt. Rev. Morris K. Thompson, Jr.*