

Easter Day
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The Very Rev. Bill Lupfer

Verrazano – when I say that name, what do you think? The bridge, the Verrazano Bridge in New York City, between Brooklyn and Staten Island in the narrows there. Verrazano Bridge, but if you were a historian, your mind might have gone to Verrazano, the explorer, whose name -- the bridge. You might have gone to Europe where Verrazano lived five hundred years ago. You might have thought of Europe in that time. In that time that Verrazano lived in Europe, there were some key core facts that Europe knew and that guided their common life together. These were facts that were a thousand years old, no longer something you would question. These were facts that Europeans' parents and grandparents and great, great, great, grandparents knew. One of those facts was that the earth is at the center of the solar system. The earth was at the center of the solar system and people knew that because Ptolemy said it. So every time an observation suggested something different, they would draw another little orbit chart. A thousand years and they knew this in their bones. Another immutable fact in Verrazano's Europe was that the Indian Ocean was land locked – surrounded by land and they knew that because Ptolemy drew the map and they had the map. And so Europe began to ask this question over the centuries: how do we get to the Indian Ocean where all the good stuff is, spices, sunshine, food; how do we get there especially with those Muslims in the way. So they knew that had the facts and they knew the direction they had to go. They were clear about the question. They kept asking and seeking a better answer; just plow through, plow through. Well, Verrazano and a few others got a little jiggedy, a little wild and said; let's go the other direction. This way has been the way for a thousand years and we know where we are; let's go a different direction. So one of Verrazano's contemporaries sailed south over the equator all the way to southern Africa and then peeped and guess what! The Indian Ocean was not landlocked. Everything was different. Everything had changed and then Verrazano and others started sailing the exact opposite direction. They had a lot of nerve to take those steps; they had a lot of nerve to go in a different direction than the wisdom of a thousand years suggested. What was in the hearts of those early explorers who opened up Europe; what was in their hearts? You can just imagine people – ha, ha –those guys, they are going to sail that way – you know, all the laughing and the derision. They had to have nerve; and you know kind of how it is, right! Well, you gotta lot of nerve! You know the edge in that one, don't you? You gotta lot of nerve to be sailing in the other direction. That's what it took, that courage and nerve is what it took for them to open up and to see life in a new and refreshing way. So I say on this Easter Morning: you're doing just fine because you have a lot of nerve for being here. If you're the type who comes to church every so often – like I was for many years, then you have a lot of nerve – now notice when you point, three fingers point right back at you! To be here now – if you're standing in the narthex and I can see you all – some of you back there – you gotta a lot of nerve to come through the rain and stand in the narthex on a morning in April. If you come here every Sunday, you gotta a lot of nerve! To think you can stand with the generations who built this place, the powerful generations who came before us, one hundred and fifty-eight

years here in Trinity Cathedral. So you all have nerve and that's exactly what you need this Easter Morning to survive in these times because these times that we live in are difficult – I don't have to tell you that, do I? And some people have a sense that maybe there's a change, a restructuring; maybe – we need a new question. Maybe we need a new question; maybe we're past seeking a better answer – how can I get my 401K to increase and increase – how can I have everything I need financially so I don't have to work and how can I be secure and how can I ??? Maybe there is a new question; how do I re-orient my life to what is true and right? How do I open my heart to God and find my safety and security there? Some of you are already asking new questions; you are the Verrazano's , the ones who are bold with nerve, so you can sit peacefully now and know that you have the spiritual moxie to handle these difficult times, you can ask a new question and you can live into a new answer, especially important Easter Morning when we worship with Jesus and his disciples and we hear that ancient story of the disciples who run to the tomb; they had a question, didn't they? Their big question running to the tomb on Easter Morning was; how are we're going to move the stone! It seems so unnecessary now, doesn't it? Imagine that they had spent their time like “those of us who are adults” planning and preparing: “son, daughter, you need time plan and prepare your life and so that stone will be covering the tomb and we will take four or five months or years, as long as it takes – no, they didn't know; they ran to the tomb with a silly question; Verrazano left port probably with a silly question that didn't turn out to be true but he discovered, you, when you run in our heart spiritually, you may have questions that open you and take you forward. Let them lead you; have the courage that the early disciples had. Now when the disciple went to the tomb, they knew that they could be in trouble. This was a person, Jesus, considered politically subversive enough to execute by the authorities and they went to go see him – Al “Qaida sympathizer-types”, right? All it took was a little guilt-by-association, but they ran there; they ran there, and when they got there, their world changed. Was it a gardener, or an angel or an understanding among themselves? The question was different; it changed from “how do we move the stone?” to something like “where is he?” This is bizarre – he is not here. Everything we had prepared for has changed –just like your lives in these times. Everything you have prepared for is beginning to change and we see that if you read the newspapers; then you go read the Bible you see people who have prepared one way and were forced to change – they were forced to change; they entered a place of radical uncertainty; so did Verrazano. Verrazano and those early explorers had an inner capacity for uncertainty. It puts me in the mind of Soren Kierkegaard who came a few centuries after Verrazano, after the awakening of Europe. Kierkegaard asked this question: he said actually “the opposite of faith is not doubt, but certainty” –the opposite of faith, not doubt, but certainty. So if you're sitting there completely sure, Soren Kierkegaard would say “you're not very faithful”. You need to go back into your heart and include that basket of uncertainty – all those scary questions; bring those out. That shows your faith. That is you as the disciple running to the tomb, not sure, but eager to find out; that it is those questions for you and your uncertainty and your nerve and boldness to ask them, those are the questions that will take you to truth. Those are the questions that will open the tomb for you. On this Easter Morning we can say that your human heart is designed to open. Your human heart is designed to seek God and to open. Kierkegaard reminds us that the only way forward is to be humble, open to uncertainty. Uncertainty is the

only way we can enjoy all those pleasant surprises that God has in store for us. Again, if you read through scripture, you see that our God is a God of surprises; every page a surprise. Every page a new direction and if we are so certain of where we are going, we will never be open to the surprises. I imagine that kind of a person, absolute certain, sort of spiritual Inspector Clouseau – ever watch Pink Panther movies? Inspector Clouseau just kind of walks along and all of this crazy stuff happens around him and he doesn't even notice. If we are so certain, we are like spiritual Clouseaus. God is breaking into our world all around us and we're just kind of moving along – so you're in a great place, you're not sure, but you gotta lot of nerve. On this Easter Morning, that first Easter Morning when the disciples got to the tomb, the open, empty tomb, they asked a new question; "Where is he?" and the angel said "He's in Galilee". Go to Galilee. He's basically saying, go home; you're Galileans, go home. Don't go somewhere else; don't externalize all of this; go to your home; find Jesus there; be open to the surprises in your regular life, your daily life, but don't go alone. That's what got Verrazano and the others in trouble. They were intrepid and they were bold, but they went alone; they relied on themselves too much. So Verrazano sailed up the east coast and even though he's bold and intrepid and relied on himself, he was kind of in the safety side of the explorers, so he kept his ships way off shore. Verrazano sailed the east coast -- never saw the Chesapeake Bay. It's pretty big; it's really big. He was way off shore; he was not taking any chances. He saw the outer banks of North Carolina, thought he had found a new continent and an ocean behind it. He was that far away. He was really into safety, even though he had the courage and that was his downfall. In the Caribbean he went ashore one time, put his boats way far away, went ashore and the locals welcomed him by killing him. And all the long bows, which were the protection in that age, the long bows couldn't even get there the ships were so far off shore. His own need for safety ended up being his demise because he didn't have companions. He had people he could order around, but he didn't have companions and if you look at the explorers, each one of those courageous people, their actual courage and nerve was their downfall. Drake in the Pacific, he was the type sort of the opposite of Verrazano, he was the type who would enter anything, absolutely squash buckling, so he goes in to solve a dispute on the beach of some local folks and guess what? Gets caught up in the fight and is killed. Nerve is not enough; we have to live in community. We as people need to live in a community where there are other voices, voices that disagree with us, so that we listen to them too. Those explorers were incredibly courageous and they asked new questions and they opened up the world for us and now we stand in their place and we can go one step further by living in a community, actually reaching out to others who disagree with us and see things differently and learn from them, then we have nerve, then we live in community, then we adjust as we go; we open our hearts and we move forward. So congratulations! You have everything you need to face the challenges ahead.