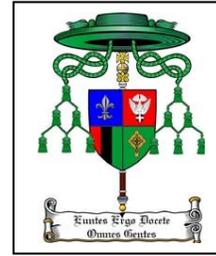


From the Desk of the Presiding Bishop

Easter Message 2018

Christ Has Risen! Alleluia! Alleluia!



I would like to posit that the truth of Easter begins with fear. Easter is terror before it is amazement. The women who came to the tomb were coming to anoint Jesus' dead body with spices. They were in mourning, they were grieving, they were emotionally fragile. Yet they were also thinking in very practical terms: "Who will roll away the stone from the door of the tomb for us?"

They get their first real Easter scare when they see from a distance that the stone had already been rolled back. Did someone steal the body? They get their second real Easter scare when they see that the tomb is empty, except for the angel who tells them, "Don't be alarmed! Don't be afraid!" He says he knows who they are looking for; "Jesus, the Nazarene, who has been crucified. He has risen. He is not here. Behold, the place where they laid him! But go, tell his disciples and Peter, 'He goes before you into Galilee. There you will see him.'"

The Easter question quickly becomes, "Where in your life are you terrified?" Maybe, just maybe, that place, that fear, whatever it is, wherever it is, is actually a place for God. We do not need to go any further than the one universal human fear -Death- to see that we all know about the reality of fear.

What the resurrection of Jesus tells us is that death is now a place for God. In the resurrection of Jesus, God has transformed death into life, terror into amazement. Easter, the resurrection, is about more than Jesus coming back to life. Easter, like Christmas, is about this incredible intersection between the human and the divine that continues to this day. Theologian Becky Brown puts it this way, "Jesus isn't a history lesson that happened long ago in some ancient land, (Jesus) wants to connect with us right now" (Becky Brown, Statement of Faith).

Jesus' resurrection becomes a model for our resurrection here and now! It is here and now that we long to hear someone say, "Do not be afraid! Do not fear! I know you are looking for the resurrected Jesus that you yourself might know resurrection too."

You may ask what exactly does it mean to experience the resurrection right here and now?

It means we come to know ourselves to be alive to God and dead to sin. It means we are forgiven. The resurrection of Jesus gives us a clean slate for starting over; for living a new amazing life free from fear.

But we have to be careful. Far too often the resurrection is proclaimed in selfish fashion. We are saved for a purpose; we are saved for service (Ephesians 2:8-10; Genesis 12:2; Isaiah 49:9). We are saved so that we might be instruments of God's life-giving love in this world. We are saved to be living examples to others of the resurrection here and now. What we can never forget is that this new life is a life of service, a life of doing, of doing ministry and mission in the name our Risen Lord!

The risen Jesus went ahead of the disciples to Galilee, where it all started. Our Galilee is here in the Church. Here is where it all begins for us. Here is where we are named and claimed in the waters of baptism. Here is where we receive the bread and cup of Hope that fuels our faith and keeps us going. Here is where Jesus meets us and sends us out to live the resurrection and be servants to the world.

My sisters and brothers, we are called to believe in God, the one and only God who raised Jesus from the dead in an act of love, not only for the Son, but for us too.

The promise is for us, and for our children, and for all who are far away. He is Risen! Death is defeated!

Do not fear but be amazed! Live fully! Live faithfully!

Dare to believe that whatever happens, it is Good News now and forevermore!

Amen! Alleluia!

A blessed Easter to all!