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He is Risen! (He is risen indeed!). And with that exchange, we join the chorus of Christians of the last Two millennia who have awoken on Easter Sunday morning with the great good news that Jesus is alive. Death could not hold him down. The stone which sealed his tomb could not contain him. The grief of Good Friday has been replaced by shouts of “Alleluia!” Jesus is alive, and now we are free to live. Happy Easter, my sisters and brothers!

I would suggest to you that on that first Easter Sunday, those who were the followers of Jesus had a variety of needs. I believe that the diversity of needs remain even today. We are not all drawn to celebrate this feast and our faith for the exact same reason today. Some of us are celebrating because we are just curious. Others have celebrate to keep peace in the family. Still others celebrate because they have worshipped on Easter every year, and they cannot imagine being anyplace else. One size does not fit all. But the story of Easter is such a gripping story that it ultimately meets the need of every person in a unique way. I want to reflect on three things this year, allow me to speak about **Passion**, and **Proof** and **Purpose**.

Now the word “**passion**” means, quite literally, “to suffer.” It suggests deep emotion, perhaps even a feeling of one’s heart breaking. The word “**compassion**” means “to suffer with.” If you have a friend who is hurting, then you are hurting too. That’s what it means to have **compassion**. You can give an **impassioned** speech, or you can feel **passionately** about someone. All of it has to do with the fact that you care so much, it hurts.

When Mary Magdalene went to Jesus’ tomb on that first Easter day, she was not expecting to find Jesus alive. She watched him die on Friday, her own heart broke when they whipped him and ridiculed him and nailed him to the cross. But her love for him did not die when he died; if anything, his **passion** proved the depth of his for his friends. Mary went to the grave because Jesus’ death changed her life.

I know there are many people who have had the same experience as Mary. You have read the Good Friday account and it has brought you to tears. You are absolutely convinced of his love for you. He took your place on that cross, he paid the penalty for your sins, and you will forever be overwhelmed by his astonishing love. This is **passion**! St. Augustine once said “If you were the only person on this earth who needed a Savior, Jesus would still have died for you.” Like Mary, Jesus death has changed your life.

If people who are drawn to Jesus because of his **passion**, they are following their heart. But you must also know that there are others who follow their head; they cannot be persuaded on emotion along, they need **proof**. Do you know people like that? Are you in fact a person like that?

In Mark's gospel, Mary goes to the tomb on that Sunday morning and she sees Jesus very much alive. She sprints back to tell the disciples that she had seen the Lord, but they would not believe her. In fact, they said it was an idle tale!

Do you recall the story about Doubting Thomas?" When Jesus appeared to the disciples, Thomas was not with them; he was off grieving somewhere alone. When he returned, they said "Thomas, we've seen the Lord!" And Thomas said "Yeah, right!" Today that response would be translated "What have you been smoking?" Thomas went on to say "Unless I see the nail prints in his hands and feet, unless I reach out and place my hand into the wound in his side, I will not believe."

Thomas needed **proof**. Concrete, tangible evidence that Jesus was alive. The next week, Jesus did appear to Thomas, and he did believe. And Jesus made a very significant remark: "Do you believe in me, Thomas, because you have seen me? Blessed are those who do not see me, and yet believe."

That is us, is it not? People who have never seen Jesus walking around on the earth, and yet we believe in his resurrection. Are we all foolish? Or are we, as Jesus predicted, blessed...because we have not seen, and yet we believe? I have known people for whom faith is a struggle. Without concrete evidence, they feel that, to believe in Jesus would be unreasonable. Ironically, sometimes they come to a place in their lives when everything is turned upside down, and then the only thing that seems to make sense is a God who loves them.

Ultimately, it comes down to faith.

But still there are others who need to have a **purpose** in this life. They cannot simply gather with others like themselves, and sing sweet hymns and pray beautiful prayers. They believe that faith calls them to action...and they are right! Do you know what one of Jesus' favorite words was? "GO!" Go. He said it all the time. "Go into all the world, preaching and teaching and making disciples." "Go and heal the sick. Go and visit the lonely. Go and feed the hungry. Go and love. Go and serve." If we believe that Jesus forgives our sins, if we believe that we are guaranteed to spend eternity in heaven, then serving is not a risk. We have already gained all there is to gain.

We as Christians have what the world needs, but they can never know it unless we go and tell them. And those who are drawn to Easter because of the radical **purpose** that Jesus gave his disciples know that this is true.

If you are one who best expresses your faith in deeds of love and action, you are in good company, because an awful lot of Christians have found their **purpose** in living by serving others in need: St. Francis of Assisi, Blessed Mother Theresa of Calcutta, Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, and many in our own communities and churches.

Some are drawn to Easter worship because their hearts were touched by the **passion** and suffering of Jesus. Others are here because God has granted them just enough **proof** to believe that he is alive. And still other are here because God has employed their hands and their feet and their lips in acts of service - **purpose**. Who knew that there were people just like us among those first disciples, and God called them all into the Kingdom? Whatever your need may be this day, the Savior who died and rose again can fill your life to overflowing. He is risen! (He is risen, indeed!) Thanks be to God! Amen!

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, starting with a cross symbol and followed by the name "Martin de Porres Griffin". The signature is written in a cursive, somewhat stylized script.

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