

**2 Easter Year A**

**4/19/2020**

**Acts 2:14a, 22-32; Psalm 16; 1 Peter 1:3-9; John 20:19-31**

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Last week I quoted a bishop saying:

*What's most important is not how we worship on Easter,  
but what we believe about Easter.*

Not so much how we celebrate the resurrection,  
but what we believe about the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

So, what do we believe?

As Christians what is the essential truth of Easter?

Easter is the day that we celebrate the victory of Jesus Christ.

The day Jesus Christ rose from the grave...

Jesus defeated death...

Though he took on our sin upon a cross...

he took on himself the punishment for our sin...

the wrath of God...

his victory was made manifest in his resurrection.

Easter is an event in the past... Jesus rose from the grave!

Easter is an event in the future... We will also rise from the dead and be  
with Jesus forever!

Easter is also an event for the present... We live out the truth of Easter and the hope of Easter every day.

The truth of Easter is that Jesus defeated death...

we do not live in the fear of death...

because of the resurrection of Jesus.

The hope of Easter is that we will rise with Christ because our Lord's resurrection is the first fruit of God's great plan...

God's great story.

And it is this fundamental truth of our Christian faith...

that is the resurrection of Jesus Christ...

that sustains us...

motivates us...

heals us...

strengthens us...

Jesus is alive today...

This is why the words of our second reading from St. Peter are so true...

St. Peter writes:

*By his great mercy he has given us a new birth  
into a living hope (not a wish or a fleeting hope, but a living hope)  
through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead*

(we hope because of Jesus resurrection and because we will rise again),  
*and into an inheritance*

(that is our eternal life... and listen to what he says about it...)

*that (it) is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading,*

*kept in heaven for you,*

*who are being protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation  
ready to be revealed in the last time.*

(1 Peter 1)

God has our eternal promise saved up for us...

And it is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading...

Our eternal promise...

that we would rise with Christ Jesus...

being protected by the power of God...

That will be revealed on that last day.

Easter gives us the promise that we as believers in Jesus Christ are  
forgiven of our sins and the truth that Jesus is alive today...

God is present with us... right here... right now.

Our Gospel reading points to this same truth... the story of Easter.  
It gives the account of how Jesus appeared before the disciples...  
on the evening of that first Easter Sunday...  
on that very day of our Lord's resurrection.

Listen to the way it starts:

*When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week,  
and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked  
for fear of the Jews,*

They were locked in the house with fear...

They did not know what to do...

They were expecting to get arrested...

perhaps being charged with stealing the body or something...

They feared for their lives...

They thought they would be tortured...

Many people today live in fear...

And not just the obvious reasons of the corona virus.

People fear for the economy... their well-being... their loved ones.

And they feared all these things before the virus...

In some ways we have become more aware of our fears.

Especially in this time of the virus.

For many of us...

the threat of the so-called wrong political people in charge.

The threat of war...

The threat of disease, a lawsuit, you can fill in the blank.

From the richest nation in the world to the poorest...

humans know what fear is.

It grips us... it makes us hide and lock our doors.

Whether physically locking a door...

or psychologically or emotionally locking a door in our heart because of fear.

Just like the disciples were doing on that day that Jesus rose from the grave.

We usually celebrate Easter day with music, flowers, and festivities...

The disciples celebrated the first resurrection hiding in a locked house.

They were scared.

And so what did Jesus say when he showed up?

St. John wrote:

*Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you."*

Jesus came and said – PEACE.

Our Church Father, St. Cyril of Alexandria, from the 5<sup>th</sup> century wrote this concerning our text:

*When Christ greeted his holy disciples with the words:*

*Peace be with you,*

*by peace he meant himself,*

*for Christ's presence always brings tranquility of soul.*

It is in the person of Jesus that we find peace.

It is in his presence we find peace.

To know Christ is to know peace.

We often think of this peace to be the absence of stress... anxiety.

But it is much more than that.

The Hebrew greeting of peace – *Shalom* – means well-being, and in its fullest sense.

It gathers up all the blessings of the kingdom of God...

shalom is life at its best under the gracious hand of God.<sup>1</sup>

As Bruce Milne puts it:

Jesus "*Shalom!*" *On Easter evening is the complement of his*

*"It is finished!" on the cross,*

*for the peace of reconciliation and life from God is now imparted.*<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Bruce Milne, *The Message of John*, The Bible Speaks Today Downers Grove: IVP, 1993), 297.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 297.

Jesus gave more than a simple greeting...

He shared the way of the Kingdom of God as we walk out the truth...

as we live out the truth of Easter...

To live our Easter calling today...

is to live in peace...

and to share God's peace to a world that so desperately needs it.

And then what did Jesus do and say after he proclaimed peace?

St. John writes:

*After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side.*

*Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord.*

*Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you.*

*As the Father has sent me, so I send you."*

*When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them,*

*"Receive the Holy Spirit.*

*If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them;*

*if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."*

Jesus showed them his scars...

It was the same body that was beaten and killed...

The same substance was redeemed...

it was renewed...

it was resurrected...

Just as we will be on that last day.

And then Jesus told them he was sending them out to tell the Easter story...

to share the good news of the Gospel...

to share his peace with the whole world...

And then he gave them the Holy Spirit...

God's presence would always be with them.

It is here that we find great comfort with God's presence...

We are not called to live in fear...

But we are called to live in the peace of God...

And instead of being absorbed with the world...

We actually go to the world and minister the love, the forgiveness, the peace of God to our neighbor...

to the world around us.

In this current time that might look like chaos...

There are so many ways we can minister the kingdom of God...

Ministering God's shalom in the world...

Praying... there are countless needs in our world

Encouraging... Phone calls, emails, and such

Giving... Helping financially for those in need

We are called to be mission minded... no "me" minded.

This is living out the truth and hope of Easter...

This is what it means to be an Easter people.

Easter is not just an event... it is a movement...

it is a story that we live out each day...

choosing to believe in the truth of the resurrection of Jesus Christ...

and allowing that truth to permeate and transform the way we talk,

the way we live,

the way we share our faith.

We might be living in a chaotic time...

a time of fear and uncertainty.

We might be living in a time of sorrow...

But we are Easter people.

We are children of the resurrected King of the universe... Jesus Christ.

Finally, I will leave you with the words of Mother Teresa of Calcutta...

Mother Teresa probably needs no introduction...

But let us be reminded that she chose to live in a chaotic time and place...

Serving the poorest of the poor and living with sickness all around...

She wrote these words:

*Never let anything so fill you with sorrow  
that you forget the joy of Christ Risen.*

May we heed the words of Mother Teresa...

And share in the joy... of Christ Risen.

Because we are Easter people...

Children of the resurrected King of the universe...

Jesus Christ.

Amen.