

Alleluia! Christ is risen!

**The Lord is risen indeed, Alleluia!**

It was dawn on the first Easter Morning. Christ had risen from death, but as yet, nobody knew it.

- Christ had risen, but the Romans were still in power.
- Christ had risen, but the world looked the same: the sun still rose in the East and set in the West and the weather was not especially different from how it had been two days before.
- Christ had risen, but those who were ill on Saturday, were still suffering on Sunday.
- Christ had risen, but on the surface there was nothing different that morning from the day before.

Jesus must have been alive again for a while by the time Mary Magdalene hurried through the dark only to find the tomb empty. She still believed him to be dead, so she still grieved for him, and all the more so when she thought that his body had been snatched – for her, the resurrection was not yet real. Jesus was alive, but she did not know it.

Some of us, or perhaps people close to us, are today still living through their own version of Good Friday; they live day to day with the reality of grief and suffering and their worry may be so great that the resurrection *cannot* seem real. If that is where we are, perhaps we know it is Easter up here [*in our heads*] – but it *seems* that nothing has changed, except that the flowers are back in church – oh, how lovely it is to see those Easter flowers.

But perhaps we might also be able to hear, along with Mary, Jesus himself, asking in compassion, “Why are you weeping?” and to know that those words were spoken not by some pristine spiritual apparition but by the *real* Jesus, who also trod the path of suffering, the wounds of crucifixion *still* on his hands and feet.

But what changed it for Mary? How did the resurrection become *real* for her? How can it become a reality for us?

When Jesus spoke Mary's name, she *recognized* him, and *knew* that he was her Lord, alive again. It was in that moment of encounter that the resurrection became for her not just a profound prophecy or a nice but far-fetched idea, but a life-changing reality. For all those living in the darkness of pain, worry, and grief, I pray that the sound of the risen, but still-wounded Christ calling *your* name may enable you to find hope renewed and joy rekindled.

At many Easter Day services around the world, followers of Christ celebrate the Sacrament we celebrate today: Holy Baptism, when God calls someone by name – in this case, Keegan – and a new follower of Christ joins Christ's family. Why does this traditionally happen on Easter Day? Keegan's family can tell you, from the conversation we had in preparation for this day: The water of baptism represents our dying to all that is old and dead in our lives and, in place of that death, embracing God's *new* life.

Baptism is a new beginning, and as we enact this Sacrament with Keegan today, we can't help recalling *our* baptism. We celebrate something deeper than just the happy ending to the story of Holy Week, more than just a song of joy and a sigh of relief after the abstinence of Lent and the drama and heartache of Holy Week have at last come to an end. Baptism reminds us that the dynamic of the gospel remains *forward looking*, and that every new start comes with a commission.

What Mary Magdalene is asked to do in today's gospel is to become the first apostle – the one who is so transformed by her encounter with Christ that she is empowered to bring the good news of the resurrection to the rest of the disciples.

Simon Peter also experienced this. The night before Jesus' crucifixion he had rejected Jesus three times, but was later forgiven and restored so that, as we read in the Acts this morning, he could stand in front of Cornelius and the crowd and proclaim the good news of Jesus' life, death and resurrection; the good news that had already spread throughout Judea.

God's love for creation is stronger than anything else we can possibly imagine. And, our message today brings that close to home – makes it personal. God's love for Keegan is stronger than anything else we can possibly imagine.

This may be a sad reality to contemplate, but contemplate it we must: Keegan's life will not all be the happy, the joyous, we celebrate today. There are days – perhaps many – in the life that lies before him when he will despair. When he will suffer. When life will seem worrisome, and the Resurrection we celebrate today will not seem real.

To all who are in such despair, like Mary Magdalene in today's Gospel; to all who are caught by guilt, like Peter the night before the Crucifixion; the message of the Resurrection is this: God's love is stronger. If even *death* cannot defeat God, then *anything* is possible. There is *always* hope, there is *always* forgiveness, there is *always* a future.

Our calling by virtue of our baptism is likewise to be God's agents, sent out from our own particular encounter with Jesus Christ to pass on the good news we have received, as we have experienced it.

Today, Keegan, you and I are called to "Go on to Galilee" – that is, into ordinary life, where Jesus is already present. And when we get there, we will find ourselves commissioned to bring the good news and the new life of the risen Christ to all, just as Mary did when she went back with that astounding statement "I have seen the Lord!"

Keegan, this is your call today, your call this baptismal day, this Easter day. Proclaim with Mary, proclaim with Peter, proclaim with me, proclaim with us:

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