

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

**Break the box and shed the nard;
Stop not now to count the cost;
Hither bring pearl, opal, sard;
Reck not what the poor have lost;
Upon Christ throw all away:
Know ye, this is Easter Day.**

**Gather Gladness from the skies;
Take a lesson from the ground;
Flowers do ope their heavenward eyes
And a Spring-time joy have found;
Earth throws Winter's robes away,
Deck herself for Easter Day.
Seek God's house in happy throng;
Crowded let His table be;
Mingle praises, prayer and song,
Singing to the Trinity.
Henceforth let your souls always
Make each morn an Easter Day.**

These words of the Victorian-era Jesuit poet Gerard Manley Hopkins express the joy we feel in our hearts as today we celebrate the Resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ. As we experience the Springtime, we so do in the shadows of an extraordinary year. We have hopefully become more reliant upon God's grace to accompany us in the "dark valley" of the pandemic. I pray that our capacity to be more patient and understanding, assuming the ardor of perseverance and surrender, has helped us to be more grateful for all of God's blessings.

Our celebration of the triumph of the Cross places us specially in the company of the disciples and friends of Jesus after the Resurrection. His friends accompanied him in his earthly ministry of healing and reconciliation; they sat at his foot as he imparted to them the knowledge they would need to spread the Good News; they were with him, even if ever-so-human, along his road of suffering.

There is something deeply moving about Luke's account of Peter's account of the Resurrection in the Acts of the Apostles. Peter, who once had been so fickle, now proclaims the victory of the Cross and the summons of the followers of Jesus to go forth and preach the victory of light over the darkness and life over death. They will take their inheritance to emulate the work of Jesus, who "went about doing good and healing those oppressed by the devil." Through the gift of grace and the Holy Spirit, all who encounter Jesus Christ will come to know that God is with them as well. They will be empowered to heal, forgive and to bring reconciliation to a broken world as an inheritance of God's love and covenantal bond with them.

John's rather vivid account of the Resurrection reveals, as in the other Gospel accounts, that women who had accompanied Jesus throughout his Passion are the first to go to his tomb. The description of Mary of Magdala going to the tomb "early in the morning while it was still dark" connotes that she went without delay. Her connection and love for Our Lord was so deep and abiding that immediately following the Sabbath she went to him. When Mary found that Jesus was not in the tomb, she ran to Peter and John, most likely in panic and consternation, to tell them of what she had found. John said that Peter and John ran, one outrunning the other to the tomb and both entered. The disciple whom Jesus had loved "saw and believed." The imagery of the friends' and disciples encounter at the tomb expresses the overwhelming sense of joy they would have ultimately felt once they knew that Jesus had indeed risen from the dead.

The noted theologian and Scripture scholar N.T. Wright offers a beautiful reflection on today's Easter Gospel proclamation. In *Broken Signposts: How Christianity Makes Sense of the World*, he writes: "Jesus is offering a way out. To understand why that might be available and how it is put into operation, you need to read the story through to the end. Then like Mary, Thomas, and Peter in John 20-21, you need to respond appropriately to the Jesus who had dealt with the sorrow, doubt, and denial of the past and now welcomes you into a new world. And as we respond we discover, and one old song put it, that 'freedom' means 'the time I've been loved.' Something about love - anyone's love - creates a kind of freedom, a new space, a larger world. Something about God's love becoming human in Jesus and dying on the cross brings about a new creation, and invites each of us to inhabit it. A new world. A free world. Free people within a world."

Thus, Easter is about freedom and liberation. It creates us anew to approach our lives and the world around us with a fresh set of eyes which has seen darkness and death and now sees overwhelming light and life!

On this April 4th, we recall the ministry and the memory of one of the greatest companions of Jesus in our nation's history. The Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. was felled by an assassin's bullet this day in 1968. Yet, this act of hatred and violence could not still the disciple's call to forgiveness and reconciliation. I leave you with these words King spoke on the eve of his death. He shared in the Lord's passion and we now pray he shares full citizenship with God in heaven.

"Well, I don't know what will happen now. We've got some difficult days ahead. But it doesn't matter with me now. Because I've been to the mountaintop. And I don't mind. Like anybody, I would like to live a long life. Longevity has its place. But I'm not concerned about that now. I just want to do God's will. And he's allowed me to go up to the mountain. And I've looked over. And I've seen the promised land. I may not get there with you. But I want you to know tonight, that we, as a people, will get to the promised land. And I'm happy tonight. I'm not worried about anything. I'm not fearing any man. Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord."

Thanks to the many, many generous and wonderful parishioners and friends who worked so hard and lovingly to prepare our environment and our beautiful liturgical celebrations. Thanks as well to those who have joined us on these festival days to reverence, praise and honor Our Lord. Please be assured of my prayers for each of you today and always!

Alleluia! "Make each day an Easter Morn."

--Fr. Tom