

Alleluia Christ is Risen, the Lord is Risen Indeed  
Alleluia!

John Donne, Anglican priest and poet of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, wrote a poem about the resurrection. He addresses his poem to the sun and tells it that it can take the day off and rest, especially considering what happened to it on good Friday. And besides, says Donne, “A better sun rose before thee to-day. Who not content t’ enlighten all that dwell On the earth’s face, as thou, enlighten’d hell; And made the dark fires languish in that vale, As at thy presence here our fires grow pale.”

Christ’s brightness, says Donne, as he descended into the darkness of death, made the fires of hell weaken and diminish.

Today we celebrate Christ’s triumph over human weakness. We celebrate God’s triumph over human violence. Today we celebrate the dawn of peace and wholeness. Today we celebrate injustice being turned on its head as it is undone.

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We have all been through what my colleagues and I have been calling The Year Long Lent. The last year

has been a difficult adjustment for all of us! Some of us have experienced this in feelings of sadness. Some of us have experienced this in feelings of frustration. We have all been through our share of discomfort. The common day to day challenges of our lives and our relationships have been exacerbated by anxiety and uncertainty.

When the news of the pandemic first reached me, the only thing I could think of was my first year as your rector as we laid to rest person after person. Each one of those goodbyes was holy in their own way as I helped to usher these members of our church family into new life with God, but the grief of loss takes its toll on a community and a priest.

I have colleagues in other parts of the country who lost member after member during this terrible pandemic who have told stories of offering last rites on a facetime call with a nurse holding up the phone.

A year later, on this Easter day, we have made it through a year. Some of you have struggled with the virus and its attendant challenges but I am so thankful that we have not lost any of our church family from the terrible disease.

I thought about this this past week during Holy Week when I reflected on the words of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane “if you are looking for me, let these men go.’ This was to fulfil the word that he had spoken, ‘I did not lose a single one of those whom you gave me.”

We have made it through and a new day is dawning. Our God is faithful and is leading us through the wilderness, leading us through this time of rebuilding and leading us toward renewal.

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The good news of Easter comes when we least expect it!

The women at the tomb that morning, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, are so overcome with the trauma of what they have just experienced, that the only way that they can encounter the news of Christ’s resurrection is in fear and disbelief. It is like that for some of us as well. We can all be wary of good news, we can all wonder, “what’s the catch?” “When will the other shoe drop?”

Jesus comes to us and meets us right where we need him to in the middle of our grief and in the middle of our trauma and gives us compassion and healing.

When Thomas despairs that he cannot believe because he hasn’t touched the wounds, Jesus meets Thomas, full of compassion and offers him his hands and his side.

When the disciples on the road to Emmaus are experiencing the tragedy and trauma of Jesus crucifixion, Jesus meets them where they are in their grief, opens the scriptures to them and breaks bread with them until their sadness is gently soothed, like a cool breeze which gently drives the clouds away, and all of a sudden, you look up and the sun has emerged.

The resurrected Christ meets us in our grief and calls us by our name.

Just as Jesus meets Mary Magdalene in the garden and asks “Woman why are you weeping?” and then calls her by her name.

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Christ gives us the gift of Joy in the midst of the changes and chances of this mortal life. There are things in our lives that are out of our control. There are unexpected twist and turns in this life—tragedies and triumphs. The truth of Christ's resurrection is that God's Divine Joy breaks into our lives when we least expect it. God's Divine Joy can well up in us even in the midst of moments of great darkness.

It is this Divine Joy and Divine Peace that Jesus imparts to those disciples and to us on this day of resurrection.

Br. Sean Glenn of the SSJE puts it like this,

“In the human body of the crucified Son, God has definitively removed the veil and shown the world what God's reign actually looks like. A giving away of self that answers the violence and self-centeredness of the world with forgiveness. A power made perfect in weakness, suffering the infliction of evil to disarm and swallow it up in the ever-greater divine love.”

The Risen Christ does not seek retribution against those who abandoned him to the mob. He does not seek retribution against Pilate who pronounced the

sentence, or the centurions who stripped him and beat him and hung him on the tree. He does not return in wrath burning hot against Peter who denied him three times the disciples who scattered like fearful sheep upon the hillside.

Rather Jesus returns in Peace with a mind toward reconciliation and forgiveness, with a mind toward healing wounds, setting free those trapped in fear and trauma—feasting with them anew and sending them forth to proclaim the good news which St. Paul proclaims in 1 Corinthians, “for as all die in Adam, so all will be made alive in Christ.”

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