

John 20:1-18

Happy and Blessed Easter!

The first to experience the Risen Christ and to share the good news among us all...a woman...Mary of Magdala.

When she finds the stone rolled away what does she do...she runs away!

We have lots of running and exercising this morning! Next we have a foot race to the tomb...hey let's go and check it out!

I wonder...did any of you run to get here this morning to check it out...or maybe you just raced to get to your favorite pew this morning in case we have more folks than usual...

And what did you come to see and hear today? Something new...or Something Old ...The same old story every year?

Now did something extraordinary actually happen this morning over 2000 years ago? Something so new that one could build their very lives around it?

Easter may not be for beginners or for the squeamish...Easter is the pinnacle of our faith and the very thing that changes us. It changes how we see ourselves and how we see the world around us.

Easter ends Jesus' teachings and then begins for us our own lives to be lived as Disciples...those who would follow Jesus' ways...and only in following His teachings would we then have a context with which to believe in something that goes beyond our human comprehension...resurrection.

But I wonder is resurrection really such a hard concept to understand now that we have a greater scientific understanding of our universe.

First let's mention some other interesting points this morning...notice that after they come to the tomb they first see that Jesus no longer needed His burial garments... as opposed to say Lazarus who comes out of his tomb still wrapped in his grave garments ...needing to be unbound by others. See Lazarus is resuscitated as opposed to resurrected!

Notice also that the head covering is cast aside alluding to the fact that Moses needed a veil to see God... whereas Jesus needs no such thing to be in the direct presence of God.

Now one of the disciples sees and believes...believes what...they don't yet know that Jesus is resurrected and they wouldn't even have an understanding of that concept.

See the disciples at this point believe that Jesus is fully ascended (like Elijah)...there is NO Body here! They now believe that the cross glorified Jesus and that He is now gone to be with God...and Mary weeps...she doesn't believe anything...she still wants to see the body...where have they taken Him?

Then Jesus utters her name...His sheep know His voice! What!? She now recognizes her rabbi...well sort of!

And Jesus tells her to go and tell His disciples that "I am ascending to my Father and Your Father...my God and Your God!"

In John's version of the story the word has been made flesh (that's how John began his gospel) and now the fulfillment of his gospel is at hand...Those who follow Jesus will become LIKE Jesus...Children of God...my God and Your God! A Holy Family...Connected in Relationship...and even death won't stand against it.

This is not resuscitation...Zombie Jesus...this is not just another chance to live for another day only to die later on...but rather this is something new

altogether...a new life that now abides in God and thus abides beyond this physical veil and these fragile limited bodies...we call it everlasting life.

As John proclaimed in the beginning of His gospel...the word WAS with God...now he proclaims the word IS with God...and because of this God is now with us.

And Mary becomes the first conduit of God's message of this good news through experiencing the life, death and resurrection of Jesus as the Christ!

In this scene, especially through Mary, we see Fear and Death ...Change and transformation...Something new is born...and it is at first unrecognizable!

So how many folks here like change? How many of you go out of your way to seek it out?

I used to teach a business course about change and changing culture...I started out by saying most people resist change with every fiber of their being...and you will all change when:

A. it's inevitable

or

B. your survival's in question

...otherwise, we would like things to stay just the way they are
...stable...safe...we can predict it...we can control it!

And I more than anyone else loves to control everything...I used to be a contingency planner for the Dept of Defense...I like to think of myself as a person who loves to manage chaos...and let me tell you it's very, very, exhausting to try and control the whole world...especially in my own little head!

Climbing uphill or swimming against the tide is exhausting...because the more things look the same, the more they are constantly changing...

Actually, when you think about it...Change is the only thing that IS constant in this world!

And one can easily see this in your family photos...

Think of yourself as a baby... how would you relate to your parents...then in grade school...high school and so on...now your parents are changing too but look at how your connection and relationships changes over time as well...
...and if you really want to see that change and transformation in action just look at your high school photo you might not even recognize the person there. Change and transformation...and with it certainly some fear.

Now we generally don't get too upset over our bodies changing (not all of us anyhow) because science tells us how we grow...so we are not too surprised by those changes...and as we grow we certainly know where we are all headed... at least physically - we know that old age for most of us and certainly death for all of us... that's where we are all headed...even though we may still think we can control or cheat the death of this physical shell.

But less noticeable...less noticeable, is the transformation that is also happening inside each one of us...science knows a lot less about that. Especially involving our own spiritual growth and transformation!

Now some things in nature show us and point to a more drastic "speeded up" transformation...God leaves us little clues throughout God's creation...

Let's look at a butterfly, for example, in its early stages it's basically an eating machine...the very hungry caterpillar...its purpose in life is only to consume as much as it can...not unlike many of us humans on the planet...but then it goes into a dark place and dies to its original form... and then it literally transforms into something that looks entirely different... and with it, it gains an altogether different purpose as well.

And this transformation leads to re-creation not only of itself, but of the world around us. The new butterfly (we don't even call it by its original name anymore) now reproduces more caterpillars and now cross pollinates the flowers around it...Now instead of consuming it now gives back through re-creation... and oh how beautiful it and our world becomes as a result!

I often wonder why Mary doesn't immediately recognize Jesus upon his resurrection. The dark container is empty...what emerges from it...something different...you might not even recognize it...

And is this a foreshadowing to come of our own transformations as well?

Today on Easter we also connect Jesus' resurrection to our own Baptisms.

Why?...it's not to get us our "get outta hell free" cards...Rather its' to acknowledge and share ritually in the birth, death and resurrection of Jesus...to share in His life AND Death AND Resurrection... and to recognize that we too throughout our lives, move towards God on our own spiritual growth and transformation. We all have the very real potential to become a container for... and then give birth to God in our world! Now instead of me, me, me...consume... we now turn outwards towards the world and WE together...we now give back.

What's important: the container... or that which is housed within it...All of us contain a seed of the divine?

But we all resist change...we all get stuck sometimes... and we cling to the things we're used to... we defend our ways and attack anything new...we resist change, evolution, and transformation...we just want to remain a caterpillar forever.

Why would we voluntarily crawl into a dark place and die to what we are...what we are used to...what we think we know.

We keep saying NO...until we say yes...and most of us at some point will have no choice...see change and transformation are inevitable aren't they.

We get so caught up in all the physical stuff...that we forget that what's MOST important is that which is housed spiritually within us...the part of us that you won't see in your photos. The part that's connected to something much greater than our selves...the part that's connected to God...the Divine Source of All our Being!

So what is God up to deep inside of you? How are you being changed... and are you open to it.

Fear is saying no to our own evolution and Transformation especially when we are closed! Change always starts first from a posture of Love...a place of being open...a place where we say yes...not to rules... or to our containers... but yes to the power of God's love and grace flowing through you... allowing it to change and transform who you are to become!

You see my friends you are all to become the very conduit for heaven on earth. You say yes...Amen to God... because God comes to dwell and live inside each of one of you...Baptism is the first time we say yes for our little ones...but we will have to say yes over and over and over again throughout our lives won't we?

It's only through this posture of love and openness that the Spirit of the living God dwelling inside of you can transform you... so that you too can become a conduit for birthing God into the world...

...and while we are all on this journey of transformation together...remember to be kind to one another... know that many of us are all at different places and maybe even on different paths in our spiritual journeys...it doesn't mean others have it wrong...it just means that we are all at different stages in who we are to become...We are all diverse in making up the Body of Christ!

So may you all come to know the power of God's love flowing through you today... and when you are finished consuming the ways of this world... may you come to be transformed into the beautiful souls you are all destined to become...

For the Lord has risen...the Lord has risen indeed... inside each one of you...but only if you let it!

Alleluia!

Your faithful servant,

carmen