

Opening Reflections for Committees: April 2018

Witness and Fellowship Ministry Team

The good news never ages.

Alleluia! Christ is risen!

Easter is about new life and hope for new beginnings. It is the decisive act of God remaking his creation. The good news never ages.

None who had followed Jesus or knew of him could figure out what to make of his death.

In Matthew's gospel, we are told that Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to the see the tomb. We do not know what their expectations were, but what they encountered was certainly not what they had imagined: an angelic figure told them that Jesus was alive and that they should go and tell Jesus' disciples.

They left with mixed feelings — fear and joy — about what they had heard. (The earliest version of St. Mark's gospel is even blunter: they ran away with terror and told no one.) On their way, they met Jesus unexpectedly. They worshipped him, and he offered them comfort: "Do not be afraid". He asked that they go and share the news of his resurrection with his disciples and tell them that they, too, will see him.

So many things can make us afraid. The loss of a loved one, work, a broken friendship and the experience of not being valued by others are among the many experiences that can leave us despondent, not knowing what to expect, even afraid. Those who met the risen Christ — the two Marys, the guards, the disciples — all experienced a profound change in their lives. Christ was alive and offered peace and hope to them. They were offered new beginnings. His presence brought not vengeance but reconciliation. Our Lord's resurrection overcame sin and death. His resurrection is true redemption, an invitation to new life, where every human flaw can be corrected, and we can be freed from whatever binds and constricts or destroys true freedom and welcomed into his kingdom.

We live in a wonderful but deeply wounded and wounding world that is at times uncaring, unforgiving, cruel, and devoid of second chances. Easter offers the assurance that the many difficulties and challenges that threaten to overwhelm us will be overcome.

Despite the desertion of his disciples, the cruelty of the soldiers and the despair of the women, Jesus offered them, as he offers us, new life, forgiveness and hope for the future. We can find healing and hope in Him who came that we might have life in all its fullness. The risen Christ, in His profound love, makes possible for all of us to have second chances, new beginnings, new life.

Jesus says to frightened disciples, "Do not be afraid." To us he says, "Do not be afraid." Whatever it is that causes you to fear, Jesus the risen Christ will be with you and will go ahead of you and continue to be with you. He offers you joy and peace, forgiveness and hope. Most of all he offers you himself. You need not fear. He has overcome the world!

Christ is alive! Alleluia!