

The Sunday of the Resurrection: Easter Day
Matthew 28: 1-10
John 20: 1-18

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Alleluia, Christ is Risen.
He is risen indeed. Alleluia.

Our God has a history of delighting in turning life upside down, of busting our expectations wide open and replacing them with a new reality. Replacing the finality of death with the hope of eternal life. Replacing despair with hope. *Life* has been turned upside down today because *death* has been turned upside down.

During the last week as we've experienced the stories of Jesus' final days. We've been confused with the disciples in the Garden of Gethsemane. We've ached with Jesus' pain of betrayal. We've grieved at the foot of the cross with the women who stood by him til the end, the women who loved Jesus best.

But beneath the agony of Holy Week, the truth of the resurrection was always there because we know how the story ends. Because of our faith, we know that the story didn't end at the cross. Or even at the empty tomb.

Simply listening to this holy story of resurrection and allowing it to bless us in this beautiful space, with the beautiful music might be a proper way to end Holy Week. We cannot take one piece of this holy story without the other. We cannot separate the pain of Holy Week from the Joy of Easter. As the beloved children of God, as faithful lovers of God, we must let both the pain and joy inform our walk with Christ.

Another journey through Holy Week has come to an end. Today we commemorate the resurrection event which occurred 2000 years ago but rejoice that it means Jesus' life story continues.

For us – on THIS side of the resurrection --- all these stories are forever layered in those who believe, in all areas of our lives. We carry them with us and in us as our own stories of death and new life. And that is the only way we can make sense of any of the details, such as we have in the scriptures

I don't think resurrection even occurred to Mary Magdalene and her friends, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and others who went to the tomb on Easter morning. Because that's not the most obvious explanation for finding nothing, where they fully expected to find Jesus' body.

Even after Jesus had told them again and again that he was to die and rise again, the reality of the resurrection takes the disciples by surprise. Their Easter morning discovery became their resurrection reality, slowly. little by little, everything pointed to resurrection: the stone rolled away, the absence of a body in a tomb, two angels sitting there in the tomb, just waiting to talk with the women who showed up that morning : "Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but he has risen."

Mary and her friends took in information until they could tell others about their experience: what they had seen and NOT seen, and what they had heard and what they had come to believe. Their experience of the resurrection became part of their own story which they told the rest of the disciples.

And the others, did not believe them. Maybe because they were women. Maybe because they sounded delirious. Or maybe because their experience was this: the dead stay dead. They had yet to receive their own experience of the resurrected Lord.

Mary Magdalene found the tomb empty. She heard the announcement from the angels that he was alive. When she finally heard Jesus call her name Jesus' resurrection became part of her story. When she told the others, she didn't say, "Christ is risen." She said from her own experience, "I have seen the Lord."

Today, and through the 50 days ahead, the 50 days that the Church celebrates the Easter season, we are challenged to examine evidence about the resurrection in our own experience. Pay attention to clues and listen to stories which lead *you* to believe that Jesus Christ is no longer dead, as he was on Good Friday. Lead you to experience the resurrection reality that God has introduced you to a new creation, a world forever turned upside down by his great power and deep love.

Follow the trail of evidence, the bunny trail if you will, that Jesus was raised and is alive even now, within us and among us. Have it make a difference in your life and in the lives of those around you.

Then follow the bunny trail a little further to consider this: If Jesus said he would rise from the tomb, and he did, everything else he said must be true as well! Read. Listen. Experience all that Jesus is saying to you and make this new life, ask God to make this new creation where life replaces death your experience as well.

Today is our name day, as the Church of the Resurrection, a very special day of rejoicing. Today is a day the Church of the Resurrection focuses on Resurrection reality. May we be filled with joy which bubbles and overflows like an opened bottle of the best champagne you can imagine.

Alleluia! Christ is Risen
The Lord is risen indeed. Alleluia!