

EASTER SUNDAY MORNING

APRIL 4, 2021

We need this celebration! We need this Easter Day!
We have been living a Lenten life for over a year and have been tried, tested, tempted. We have lost close family, relatives and friends in a virus death. Today we are reminded that life is stronger than death. We need this celebration.

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The divisions in our country have been laid bare. Black lives continued to be put to death this year; and likewise, Asian Americans. Today we are reminded that all lives matter. We need this celebration!

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Men, woman and children are killed in the streets of Myanmar to protest the capture of their country by military forces. Elsewhere people abandon their old homes because of violence and poverty and are met with rejection and abandonment. Today we are reminded that the Good Friday Jesus suffers with all people, especially the poor and abandoned. But Easter Sunday says this is not the end of the story. We need this celebration.

Death and new life are the very pattern of our universe. Death and new life occur every day. We would not have our solar system nor the earth had not a star died. Jesus had to die to be one with the entire human race and with the cosmos. And he had to die a brutal and painful death to show us that God was truly one and truly present with all who die a brutal and painful death today. But God's plan called for new life and the man, Jesus of Nazareth, arose from the dead to be the first fruits of a new creation. He has burst the bonds of death, of time and space, of all limitation, and opened a new world for all of us.

In the early centuries, our Christian faith grew and exceeded any expectations because people faced death rather than deny their oneness with Jesus Christ. "The blood of martyrs is the seed of new life" was an expression often heard.

And the process continues to our day. Forty-one years ago, March 24, 1980, Oscar Romero, outspoken Archbishop of El Salvador was shot dead while celebrating

Mass. Today his memory is a strong and encouraging figure to the people. He is dead but lives. So many other men and women have courageously given their lives in the cause of the new life in Jesus Christ. Today, mothers and fathers, simple men and women, give their lives for their children and for the future of us all.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is not a myth, not a story, not just a symbol. Despite the clumsy attempts of priests and bishops to ignore the ways of Jesus and forsake the people of God, it is the death and resurrection of Jesus that all of us celebrate that is the basis of our faith. And it is precisely our faith that helps to overcome our fears, our cynicism, our doubts, our despair in the midst of the world's deadly ways because we know we are not alone in the midst of our personal and national and worldly tragedies.

We are like Mary Magdalen whose love for Jesus overcame any obstacles and led her to remain faithful. We are the disciple whom Jesus loved who looked at the empty tomb and the burial cloths and knew what Jesus had been proclaiming to them for the first time.

If you have doubted your faith, especially your faith in the Resurrection, be like Mary Magdalen who was on the brink of something new and did not shrink back. She became the first witness to the Resurrection. She spread lessons of patience, gratitude, our need for community and interdependence, along with an openness to social and personal change. Confronting the Resurrection makes us witnesses that we can be agents of God's transforming presence.

Two aspects of the Easter message are especially important. First, the death and resurrection of Jesus assures us that the presence of God can be found in the person who is suffering, even in one undergoing a horrific death by crucifixion. And, second, Easter assures us that God's signature activity is to bring life out of death. We cannot always grasp how God is doing that but we believe that God is always on the move to bring new life out of the many forms of death that we experience. That's who God is.

And so, we need to celebrate. We need this Easter Day!

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