

EASTER SUNDAY

April 17, 2022

It is Easter Sunday again. May I ask each of you what is significant about this Easter Sunday for you? Does it have any meaning for you? You probably have not given much thought to such a question. Let me tell you about how Easter has impacted some people both in the past and in the present.

First the past, in fact the past of 2000 years ago. Listen to these people –

1. I am called Simon though the Master gave me the name of Peter. I was a fisherman with my brother Andrew. Then he came along and my life was changed. I loved this man so. I would do anything for him, or so I thought I would. My world came crashing down on Friday. I betrayed him. I ran away. I heard Jesus was dead. I considered suicide like Judas. I joined the others in hiding.

This morning, following the Sabbath day, John asked me to come with him to visit the grave. The tomb was empty as Mary Magdalen had told us. I was confused and bewildered. Who took the body? Could he really be alive? I did not know whether I wanted him to live or not. Filled with shame and guilt, I did not think I could face him. I went back home and shivered and wept.

This evening most of us were still in hiding. John believed he is somehow alive. Mary Magdalen had come to tell us she saw him. Was this possible? And then he appeared. We expected complaint, hurt, accusations. But he softly said “Shalom”. He wished us peace and we felt his forgiveness and deep love.

I had hit bottom and had nowhere to go. I finally let go of trying to direct everything. I surrendered to him.

2. I am John. I too was a fisherman. I had a very hot temper and wanted recognition and prestige. Jesus called me and my brother “Sons of Thunder” for our belligerent attitudes. Actually, I was very insecure and needed approval. Jesus challenged me to pray, to write, to give up my anger. I realized he loved me and wanted me to be close to him. I was with his mother, Mary, and Mary Magdalen, Friday standing beneath his cross. I had given up my arrogance and was at peace

with Jesus, with Mary, with God. Jesus gave me his mother so we could care for each other.

This morning I went to the tomb with Peter. I was overwhelmed with feeling the presence of Jesus. I did not understand but I believed.

This evening he came to our midst and I felt I was his beloved disciple once again.

3. My name is Mary. I come from the seaside village of Magdala. I once was a very troubled young woman. Then I met Jesus and his piercing love shattered all my defenses. I joined the group of disciples and traveled with him in Galilee and Judea. I came to love him and wanted to help him in his mission.

On Friday I stood at the cross with his mother, Mary, and his beloved disciple. Loss, desolation, despair was all around and within us. And yet this noble man showed us how to trust God in the midst of pain.

This morning I went to the tomb to anoint the body but there was no body to be found. Could someone have stolen it? I wanted to scream with grief. Then I heard my name, "Mary" and I turned to see him.

My love, my hero, my friend. After he left me I ran to tell the others but they were hesitant to believe. I had become the apostle to the apostles.

Now, we pass from the first century to the twenty-first century as we hear these voices.

4. My name is Marina. I live in Bucha in Ukraine. My home has been battered by shells. There are bodies in the streets. Over the years our people have suffered persecution, war, sickness and death. We face it all again. Christ suffers among us. But we are Orthodox Christians and Easter is our feast. Christ may suffer with us but, on Easter, we shall greet each other, "Christ is risen!" and hear the response "Christ is truly risen". We are people of faith and of hope and of love. I know we are not alone and are loved.

5. And what does Easter mean to me? I have had a life full of blessings and gifts. But I admit I have been like Peter, often a big talker but lacking the courage to

follow through. I have been like John, a son of thunder and knowing all the answers. I have been like Mary Magdalen with my many demons. But with the three of them I have heard the voice of the risen Christ, "Shalom. I love you. I forgive you". As I grow older I realize this could be my final Easter on earth. The Resurrection of Christ is my assurance that God is faithful and keeps his promises. I am prepared to die with Christ so that I may rise with him.

And how about you? Is there any way that Easter is significant or meaningful to you this year?

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