

Dear Friends,

Alleluia! Christ is Risen! Death is powerless against He who is the Resurrection and the Life. Alleluia!

Over forty days ago we began a journey, a pilgrimage with the Cross of Christ. Accompanying us on our journey were many companions: people with addictions, families separated from one another, the elderly and people with special needs, our nation divided, those living in poverty, the hungry and homeless, victims of human trafficking and refugees. With them we climbed a high mountain where Jesus was transfigured, sat at a well observing Jesus giving a Samaritan woman a drink from the stream of life-giving water, witnessed a man born blind receive his sight, and with two grieving sisters saw how God enters into human grief and suffering to transform it. We also entered an upper room to be fed by Jesus at a meal like none other, only later to go with him in prayer to a garden and eventually stand at the foot of his cross. Our pilgrimage doesn't end at the cross, though, as powerful as that cross is. There is one more place to travel, into another garden with an empty tomb and an anxious Mary Magdalene.

In John's Gospel Mary goes to the tomb alone. There is no reason for others to go with her since Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea took care of Jesus' burial rituals prior to his being entombed. So Mary goes alone and finds the stone removed. Anxious and deeply troubled she goes to Peter and the other disciple to report the absence of Jesus' body. Together they return to the tomb and the two disciples verify her words.

Though in the culture of her day Mary Magdalene needed men to confirm what she had witnessed, she was the first witness of the Resurrection. That is why she is called the "Apostle to the Apostles;" she first announced the Resurrection to them. Today, in the midst of the many crosses people carry, we are being called as well to witness to the triumph of the Cross of Christ.

Easter does not deny the reality of sorrow and suffering. What it proclaims is the reason for our hope. Christ's empty tomb heralds the great Alleluia, announcing that love, compassion, generosity, humility and selflessness will triumph over hatred, bigotry, prejudice, despair, greed and death. It reveals that even in the most difficult of times we can live our lives in hopeful certainty of the fulfillment of the resurrection at the end of our life's journey.

We are challenged then to bring that hope into peoples' lives. The Risen Christ challenges us this Easter day to love one another as he taught us, with compassion, forgiveness, reconciliation, sincerity and selflessness. Christ challenges us to embrace the life of the Gospel, awakening the promise of new life in every situation, in every cross people carry. Happy Easter!

Peace and blessings,

Father John