

Happy Easter! Jesus is risen, just as He said!

Perhaps we need to keep the hope of Easter in mind as we look around at the world in which we live. Over the past few weeks we have observed the anniversaries of the beginning of the U.S. Civil War, the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., and the start of the BP oil spill in the Gulf. We can look at our own times, and see conflicts in various countries in the Middle East and in Africa. We can see the political divides in the U.S., as the debate over the federal budget continues. Conflict and suffering are still with us. But we do not despair. The reality of Easter brings us hope! In His Cross and Resurrection Jesus has freed us from the power of sin and the fear of death!

In both the Gospel reading for the Easter Vigil (Matthew 28:1-10), and for Easter morning (John 20:1-9), Mary Magdalene finds that Jesus' tomb is empty. In Matthew's account, an angel says to her and another Mary: "Do not be afraid! I know you are seeking Jesus the crucified. He is not here, for he has been raised, just as he said."

As we reflect on what the angel says to the women, and what is going on in our world, perhaps we get a better idea of to what this day really calls us. For just as Jesus is not in the tomb, He is not in fear, or resentment, or hatred or injustice. Down through the years, people have sought to justify their actions by trying to put Jesus in these things, but He is not in them.

And when we look at all the ways we are told will get us what we are looking for (or hold on to what we have), such as violence, or intimidation, or exploitation or discrimination or greed, we find that they are as empty as the tomb. We will not find peace and joy by accumulating things, or using others, or keeping others down. No, Easter calls us not to emptiness, but to fullness of life! Jesus' Resurrection shows us the promise for those who choose to love and serve others. He shows us that blessed indeed are those who make peace and work for justice!

As St. Paul says in one of the options for readings on Easter morning (1Corinthians 5:6b-8): "Therefore, let us celebrate the feast, not with the old yeast, the yeast of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." As Jesus has given us hope in His Resurrection, so we are to share our hope with the world. Who would have thought that there would be protests for freedom in so many parts of the world? Look at the courage of the people trying to repair the damage to the nuclear reactors in Japan, or the perseverance of those working to rebuild in Japan and in Haiti and in so many other places. There are signs of hope, even now.

And although we cannot see the fulfillment of the kingdom of God, we can recognize those attitudes and practices which are empty, and spend our time in helping lift others up – out of poverty, oppression and despair. We *can* live in the hope of Easter, sharing the love of God in the Risen Christ!

May God continue to bless us all, and may we truly be Easter people.

In Christ,

Fr. Phil, CP