

Easter Service – April 12, 2020

### **Pastor Stephen's Easter Message:**

While we cannot gather together to celebrate Easter with joy this season, the wonder and the gift of Easter is still ours and our hearts rejoice even as we long to be together. Our loving God, who has shown us the path of life in Christ our Lord, will gather us together again and we shall be filled with joy in the presence of the Risen One.

The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit with you all.

### **Easter Prayer:**

Gracious God, in the Easter dawn you raised Jesus from death to life. As we are united with him in death so unite us with him in resurrection that we may walk in newness of life. **Amen.**

### **Readings:**

Jeremiah 31: 1 – 6; Psalm 57: 1, 7 – 10; Colossians 3: 1 – 4;  
Matthew 28: 1 – 10

### **Homily:**

This year in the cycle of readings our Easter reading comes from the Gospel of Saint Matthew. St. Matthew's Gospel, in retelling the wonderful event of Easter, gives us a sometimes

whimsical story about feet. Odd thing to be talking about on Easter, yet the writer does it very masterfully and with great joy.

On weary feet, the two Mary's make their journey to the tomb that first Easter dawn. They proceed slowly to see what they dreaded to see - Jesus, who was crucified, dead in the tomb.

What was waiting for them was hardly expected. There before their very eyes was an angel, lounging on the tomb's stone, sitting there, feet dangling, playfully waiting for the first witnesses of the resurrection with joyful Good News to share.

I suspect the angel rather enjoyed his work that first Easter morning. He probably enjoyed surprising the soldiers who were guarding the tomb...knocking them off their feet, quite literally...and then startling the two Marys. You can hear him having a bit of fun with the them.

“Looking for Jesus, are you? So sorry, ...you just missed him. He is not here, he has risen, just as he told you he would. Come and see the place where he had been, and then go, tell the others.”

It would have been a sight to behold, the two Marys tiptoeing around the bodies of the soldiers to see the truth the angel had proclaimed...an empty tomb...then running, as fast as their feet would take them, to tell the others. Feet flying, running for joy...

and then falling at the feet of the Risen One as he greets them on the way, filled with faith, offering their worship.

Perhaps you see yourself in the Easter Gospel this morning. We, who have been wearied by the grief of this world and who have kept vigil at the death of our loved ones; we, who are faced with the reality of our own death, also hear the angels message with wonder and remember the hope that God has planted within our own hearts. Death simply does not have the last word in our lives. Christ comes to us speaking words of life, sharing his life with us as a gift no one and no thing can take away from us. Wherever our feet take us, whether we be plodding with weariness or running for joy, he will be there, accompanying us to life in him.

Notice that the two Marys came to the tomb expecting nothing but sadness. That can happen – life can batter our faith and make us lose hope – cause us to forget God’s promises for awhile. The Good News is that Christ does not leave us there. He comes to us, in many and various ways, and brings us back to hope, to relight the spark of our faith, to remind us of the joy that is ours.

Celebrate those times in your life when you will, like the angel in today’s Gospel, have the opportunity to speak the Good News of the resurrection to others and share the hope that is within you. And blessed are you, also, when others journey with you in your darker days and gently help you remember God’s promises and the joy of our life in Christ.

That is one of the reasons why our Christian faith is lived in the community of the faithful – the Church – so that we can encourage and support one another as we journey together with Christ from death to life. God knows, we need all the help we can get to be faithful, so God gives us each other to share Easter hope and live in Easter joy. We journey together, on faithful feet, as friends of the Risen One.

May God bless us and fill us with joy as we worship the Risen One this Easter. May his presence among us in this Holy season, even in our solitude, make our joy complete. **Amen.**

### **Prayers of the Faithful:**

With Easter joy in our hearts, we celebrate the resurrection of Christ our Lord. Even in the midst of our fear and uncertainty we find our hope renewed by the words of your Gospel. Strengthen us, help us always move from fear to faith, and fill us with joy as we share Christ's victory over death. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for our loved ones who we cannot be with this Easter. We pray for all who are ill and in need of your healing touch. Hold them in your mercy, and surround them with your holy presence. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for all who mourn. May our sharing in Christ's risen life bring them comfort as they say farewell to their dear ones who now dwell with Christ in our Heavenly Father's home. We shall

see them again, and our hearts will be filled with joy. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for all who do work that now endangers them as they provide for our basic needs. Watch over them, protect them, and bless their holy work. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We look forward to the future, for wherever you lead us we will go trusting in your grace and mercy and the compassion you have shown to us in Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Gathering all our prayers into one, we pray the prayer you taught us. Our Father...

May Almighty God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, bless us and keep us always in the Risen Life of Christ our Lord. **Amen.**