

In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen

Christ is risen. Alleluia!

Christ is risen, indeed!

Alleluia!

Our gospel reading for today reveals yet again that Jesus' resurrection can not be put down to the overactive imaginations of his followers who want to go on believing that He is still with them, if only in their thoughts and emotions.

Let's take a minute to look at the encounters that scripture shares with us.

Let's look at one of those encounters that happened between Jesus' followers and the Risen Christ after He died on the cross, was buried in the tomb, and rose victorious to new life.

On Easter Sunday morning, Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary, the mother of James, and two other unidentified women, arrive at the tomb to find the stone rolled away and His body gone.

In their grief and disbelief, they are met by two men in white. The scripture tells us, these men wore dazzling white. The men tell the women that Jesus has risen and is gone from the tomb. Mary and the other women return to Jerusalem to tell the other disciples that He is alive. And they don't just walk back to the upper room. They run to tell the others what they have witnessed.

And now, here we are with the disciples, locked in the upper room, scared, tired, and afraid of what will happen next. They have many more questions than they have answers.

Can you imagine what it would have been like for these followers of Jesus, scared, unsure of their own safety and wonder what will happen next, to have these women, the first disciples to know that Jesus is risen, burst into that room and share their story? Now, most of the disciples would have been men. So, the women being the first to discover the empty tomb would have made the disciples in that locked room skeptical of what the women were saying. For why would the resurrection be revealed to women? Why not, that is my response to such an idea.

It is Peter who realizes that their story can only be confirmed by first-hand, eye-witness observation. So, Peter goes to the tomb, looks in, and only then does he believe.

In the Book of Acts, we hear more about the disciples who saw Jesus after the resurrection. And we hear about others who receive the good news from these disciples who were first-hand witnesses to Jesus in his risen form. All of these followers of the Risen Christ will be the ones who will be charged with bearing witness to what they know. They are not to hide it from the world, but to share freely the good news so that all might come to know the saving grace of Jesus Christ, and become heirs to God's gift of salvation, so freely given for all humankind. Peter finds the courage within himself to begin to preach the resurrection and the power of the Risen Saviour. Others will follow his lead and so it has been down through history for the last Two Thousand years.

There is much evidence about the resurrection which we will never know because it was never recorded for our benefit. But what we have heard in scripture, in the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles, is all we need to know, so we may receive God's gift of salvation, and become witnesses in our own time.

One thing that I have come to realize is this. When we break bread together, or sit down to share a meal with others, or even eat alone, we must always remember that God is with us. We are never alone. It is in the breaking of bread within community, or in giving hospitality to the stranger, that we are witness to

God being among us. It is in caring for the other that we live out our discipleship to God's community.

There is another dimension to being hospitable which we, as Christians, and as human beings, need to understand. Receiving hospitality from others, or being strangers ourselves, or being the guest in another's home, sharing in their hospitality, are all ways we witness to the good news of the Gospel. Remember, it is as blessed to give, as it is to receive. And the reverse is equally true.

It works both ways.

As Christians, we believe that all humans are made in the image of our Creator and all are welcome in this place. We believe that God will never abandon us, even in times when we, being human, turn our gaze away from God's light. We believe that everyone is welcome in the Kingdom of God, should they chose to turn toward the Light.

Our journey of spreading the good news about God's gift of salvation begins with trust. Trust in the assurance that Jesus did come to live among us, human in every way, yet still divine. He suffered and died for our redemption and rose victorious to reign with God and the Holy Spirit.

So, here we are in the early decades of this twenty-first century and we are still being asked to witness to God's love and care for all creation. This is our ministry to the world, the ministry of being witnesses for the kingdom of God. And that means we are to share God's gift of love for all humankind and for all God's creation and not hide it under a bushel basket where the light of Christ can not be seen.

Are you ready to accept God's call? I am.

Amen