

Like many of you I have been watching the Holy Week videos and daily offerings on u-tube. Both St. Marks and others. Last Saturday I watched the video of the 2019 Easter Vigil and I was struck by something mother Sue said in her homily. "How blessed are we to be together this night!" It was a glorious service and we were indeed blessed to be there together to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus.

What a difference a year can make.

Little did we know that we wouldn't be there this year for Easter; that for the first time in 172 years, Easter would not be celebrated in that place. How blessed we are to have technology. We can't worship in our church but thanks to technology we can worship with our community and the world wide community. The resurrection is just as real as if we had been there then or if we had been in the church last week.

Just think how the disciples must have felt on that first Easter night. One week they were with Jesus on his triumphal entry into Jerusalem. Crowds were cheering and waving palms. Everything was good. The next week Jesus was gone, crucified, and they were huddled together, locked in a room scared, they would be killed next because they were his disciples. They didn't know what to do without their beloved friend and leader. Jesus had taken care of them ever since they had left everything to follow him. Now he was dead and they were alone.

What a difference a week can make.

They didn't know what to think or what to do. Suddenly Jesus appeared and they weren't alone. He showed up and changed

everything. Peace be with you. Receive the Holy Spirit. Here's what I want you to do. Everyone who saw him believed - and rejoiced.

What a difference a day can make.

This Easter is unlike any other that we have experienced thanks to the coronavirus. Presiding Bishop Curry in his Easter sermon reminded us that it's not unlike that first Easter. The followers of Jesus were not in a beautiful church adorned with lilies and the sound of hymns on a magnificent organ. Like the disciples, we too are behind locked doors or at least face masks. We are separated from those we love. People are scared. Some of us, or our families and friends, have lost jobs or health insurance. Food is scarce. And the gravity is starting to hit home as many of us know, or know of, someone who has died or is gravely ill in intensive care fighting for their lives. Some of us fear for elderly parents in nursing homes where the virus is rampant and we can't visit.

And yet, it is Easter and we are resurrection people. We believe the resurrection happened and is happening. Jesus is with us. The lord is risen!

In the midst of the pandemic Jesus shows up. You can see him in the faces of the ER nurses and the ambulance drivers, the bus drivers, the workers in the checkout lane at the grocery store or the people who deliver your groceries.

In the midst of all the dark corners of our lives, in all the locked up places in our hearts and minds, Jesus always shows up whether we called him or not. He is persistent. He shows up and breathes peace into us and gives us the strength and courage to do what needs to be done. He doesn't do it *for* us but walks beside us and calms our fears.

We long to go back to normal. For things to be the way they were before. Jim Wallis said in Sojourners Magazine this week, “Easter was never meant to go back to normal; but was, and still is, intended to make all things new.” Jesus came to make all things new and Easter, in the church building or out, reminds us of that.

People are reaching out and connecting in new ways. I have received more handwriting letters in the last week than in years. We have more opportunity to worship every day. States and countries are collaborating across boundaries that divide us. Donations of food and cash are pouring in for the Westminster Food Pantry. And more importantly, perhaps for the first time, or maybe at a deeper level, we are seeing just how much disparity there is in the world and how much work there is to do.

What can we do so that something good and lasting comes out of this catastrophe?

What are the dark places in the world where we can shine the light of Christ?

What can we do differently so this Easter makes all things new?

so that it makes a difference today, next week...next year?

Yes, we will eventually return to worship in our church but we and the world will be forever changed by what we do within our community and beyond in the coming months. Jesus came to make all things new but it's up to us to make it happen. Amen