



Easter Sunday (C)
St. Mark's Episcopal Church
April 21, 2019
The Rev. Dr. Christian Brocato, Rector

+Let us pray: O God, guide us to walk in the light of Christ. Help us to see that the light of your presence is with us, to lead us, to guide us, to sustain us and to bear us in to the light of resurrection. Amen.

Some of us may remember reading Victor Hugo's *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* at some point in life. It was brought back to life this past week when the world watched live coverage as the beloved cathedral of that book seemed engulfed in flames.

Hugo wrote of the Hunchback: "He therefore turned to mankind only with regret. His cathedral was enough for him. It was peopled with marble figures of kings, saints and bishops who at least did not laugh in his face and looked at him with only tranquility and benevolence... The saints were his friends and blessed him..." Vivid images then and other vivid images now.

A seeming catastrophe of epic proportions, this past Monday the world watched the great Notre Dame Cathedral in flames. A spokesperson for the Cathedral was quoted saying that the cathedral would likely burn to the ground. Happily, he was wrong. Though seriously damaged, there were little resurrection accounts throughout the reporting of the disaster. Because of the restoration project, many artifacts, statues and paintings recently had been removed and placed in storage and therefore safe from harm.

The morning after the fire, one photo captured my attention. It was of a stream of light piercing the darkness of the High Altar area. It revealed the golden cross above the altar and marble sculpture of the Pieta. That beautiful sculpture is of Mary, arms outstretched, with the crucified Jesus across her lap.

I have worshipped in that cathedral and heard magnificent music there on numerous occasions. From the ashes of the fire, the cathedral will rise again. Out of the darkness, despair and sadness, light will come. Once again people from around the world will experience God's presence in that sacred place.

In that great cathedral, Easter has been celebrated for some 850 years. In this great building, Easter has been celebrated since 1848. People have come here from all walks of life to be enveloped in Easter light and joy. Many have come out of the darkness of broken lives, serious physical ailments, loss of loved ones and friends, the aftermath of wars and the list goes on. They came, and we have come because deep within the human person is a longing for light even in the midst of darkness. We long to see and experience a shaft of light which can pierce darkness and illuminate our path with light.

It would be easy to spend time chronicling stories of darkness in our lives. In many ways, we and others in too many places in the world live in the midst of darkness. We live in an age in which darkness seems to blanket the news at nearly every turn. There are innocent children at our southern border longing for life. There are millions of people around the world without shelter, food or clean drinking water. There are those suffering from gun violence and loss of life like never before. In the midst of these things and others, there is hope. Light can burst forth from darkness!

A twenty-three year old woman scientist recently discovered the first ever photos of a black hole 55 million light years away. The photos are amazing. She and the team of scientists were ecstatic. (Bowman and a team of scientists)

Two unlikely partners, Oprah Winfrey and Prince Harry, have teamed up! (TV (Apple) Series on mental health) Oprah asked Harry what he believed to be the two most critical things facing the world today. His response was climate change and mental health. Together, they hope to make a difference.

Little miracles happen every day. New methods of transplants and other life-changing treatments are saving lives. Some previously homeless individuals and are now living productive lives. Some of the stories we hear at Families Against Narcotics which meets here every month give new hope for others longing for life.

Lives are supported through our ministries. Our Breakfast Cafe serves some 150 of our neighbors every Sunday of the year. We work to transform lives through partnerships with the East Leonard Elementary School, Degage Ministries and the Islamic Center of Grand Rapids. We support numerous social services agencies in our city. We tend the sick and the elderly in homes, hospitals and nursing homes. We remain committed to beautiful worship, sacred music and formation for children, youth and adults. St. Mark's works to live in to the glorious resurrection of Jesus and bring light to the world.

On this Easter Sunday, we have come to celebrate resurrection light. On this day, Christians around the world believe that the Son of God burst forth from the darkness of a tomb. However it happened, we believe that the Resurrection of Jesus did happen.

Just days ago, we walked with Jesus from Palm Sunday, to his Last Supper, to the Cross and to the tomb. No doubt his followers experienced deep sadness and despair. Jesus, their brother, their friend and their companion was laid in a dark tomb with a great stone placed in front of it.

Friends in Christ, what are the dark places of your life in need of light? This is not a rhetorical question but a question for us all. I know of such places in my own life and perhaps you do as well. How do we recognize darkness in life and invite the light of Jesus' Resurrection to heal it and make it whole?

I believe that we are here this morning because we believe that there is light in this place, in this sacred place, in this holy liturgy amidst the holy people of God on this glorious day we called the Resurrection of Jesus. Can we offer our lives to God and let the light of Christ's Resurrection give us life? Can we rejoice and be glad and go forth renewed, refreshed and catalysts for change? I believe the answer is "yes"!

Jesus Christ is risen! Darkness is shattered! His promise of light is ours! Let us embrace it, make it our own and live in the light of Christ's presence today and every day of life. Amen! Alleluia!