



Easter Sunday
Evening Prayer
April 12, 2020

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Ruth Haley Barton recently wrote the following in reflecting on today's Gospel: "The story of the disciples' journey on the Emmaus Road doesn't conclude with a nice meal and a good night's sleep, although that would have been a fitting ending to a really big day. They were so jazzed that sleep was impossible. They had been transformed in Christ's presence—from dazed and dejected wanderers to confident and joyful bearers of good news—and they couldn't wait to tell their story... There were others who had experienced Jesus' transformed and transforming presence on the other side of that weekend's traumatizing events, and each encounter was unique."*

If we were in a live Zoom conference right now, I wonder what transforming stories you might be able to offer on this Easter evening? How have you found your life changed for the good over these past weeks? To be sure, these weeks have offered tremendous challenges whether you are single and alone or a family person with one, two or three children to tend, school and entertain.

Over these past several weeks of 'staying at home', not a day that prayers have not been offered online. Those prayers have been offered because the mission to which we are called at St. Mark's and in our lives of faith doesn't stop at the doors of the Church.

Not praying and worshipping in the historic and beautiful Sanctuary of St. Mark's has presented us all with a new reality. That reality has called us to be one with God and with one another not in a sacred space but in a virtual reality of connectedness like never before.

The doors of St. Mark's may be closed but the doors of our hearts are a different story altogether. The encounter of the disciples with Jesus set ablaze burning hearts within them, and that fire was a fire which would not be extinguished.

I believe that the doors of our hearts are called to be flung open. The Holy Spirit of God in the Risen Christ can ignite a fire in our hearts just as the disciples were on fire in post-resurrection encounters with Jesus.

The challenges of the present days will not soon go away. But little by little, I hope and pray that each of us is adjusting, finding new ways of being 'at home' and new ways of being 'at home' and connected with God in Jesus. On this Day of the Resurrection of Jesus, we are called to be 'at home' with him.

Late last night after the broadcast of our Easter Vigil Service and Baptism of Jack Ilem at 7:00 p.m., I completed watching the movie, *The Son of God*. I had gone in search of 'religious movies' earlier in the week. I commend it to you as the most moving and engaging movie of its kind I have experienced. On Friday night after experiencing our Solemn Liturgy of Good Friday, I watched Mel Gibson's *The Passion of Christ* for the second time in my life. It is a very different rendering than other movies about Christ's last days on earth. What was compelling even in the midst of so much blood and gore was the final scene.

As Jesus was lowered from the Cross, he was laid in the arms of Mary, his mother, whose expression was not one of utter sorrow and abject grief but almost peaceful resignation. His passion and death had ended. His scourging and pain were over. His life as had been experienced by Mary, his disciples and thousands of others seemed a distant past.

The sword which was predicted to pierce Mary's heart made its mark, as she watched her son die upon the Cross. His life had come to an end and then, Jesus was laid in a newly hewn tomb. One can only wonder how Mary and many others waited in the darkness for the light which Jesus had promised. Today even in the midst of the sadness and tragedy of COVID-19, the light of the Resurrection of Jesus can warm our hearts. We are enkindled with a spark and fire of Divine Love in Jesus. We have walked with Jesus throughout Lent, waved imaginary palm branches last Sunday, listened attentively to the Passion narrative on that Sunday and on Good Friday, and we accompanied Jesus throughout the week. He accompanies us and continues to accompany us this day.

Today ushers in the great Season of Easter in which we are called to walk in the light of Jesus. That light can be transforming for us through his love his love for us and can enable us to be bearers of resurrection light wherever we find ourselves.

Like the disciples after post-resurrection encounters with Jesus, the story doesn't end on this Easter night. It continues for us who claim Jesus as our savior, brother and friend. It continues for us who long so much for the healing and wholeness of the broken world in which we find ourselves. The first verse of the beloved hymn, 'Amazing grace', ends with "I was blind and now I see". The Resurrection of Jesus opens a blazing light in to the darkness of life, so that we and others might see the true light of Jesus, God's beloved and ours as well.

Our lives of faith are set on fire this Easter Day not within houses of worship but within the house of God within our hearts. Whatever we have to do to enable that fire to be set ablaze, let God's grace in and through the Resurrection of Jesus make that a reality.

May we find Jesus on our Emmaus Road of life, in our homes, in our isolation and sheltering in place, in our hospitals, in ICUs in our country and around the world and in food distribution lines across the nation. May we find Jesus deep with us calling us to be 'at home' with him like never before. "Christ is Risen", and we are forever changed. Let us invite Jesus to roll away the stone from our hearts to let them burn with passionate desire for him who loves us without reserve.

May the Risen Christ give you peace and blessings on this the night of his glorious resurrection and throughout the days to come. Amen! Alleluia!

[*https://transformingcenter.org/2015/06/part-4%e2%80%a8-told-happened-road/](https://transformingcenter.org/2015/06/part-4%e2%80%a8-told-happened-road/)