

EASTER SUNDAY OF THE RESURRECTION OF THE LORD “A”

APRIL 11/12, 2020

This an Easter Sunday unlike any we have experienced. It brings mixed emotions to all of us.

In his telling of the events of the first Easter Sunday morning, St. Matthew relates that in the dim light of dawn, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary, shrouded with grief at the death of Jesus, come to the tomb to complete the burial rituals, not completed on Good Friday. Matthew states that arriving at the tomb the women experience a great earthquake, a frightening vision of an angel descending, and the stone covering the entrance to the tomb rolled away.

As I think of the angel, I’m reminded of a UPS or FedEx delivery person. Like the delivery person, the angel is very focused on his job—to deliver the good news of Jesus’s resurrection. He is there to deliver a “package”, nothing more, nothing less. He is there to ring the doorbell, hand over the “package”, hold out the clip board for signing, and then depart. After receiving a parcel from the UPS or FedEx delivery person, it is up to the recipient who receive it to decide what we will do with it. As we receive the “package” from heaven’s “delivery man” this Easter, like the holy women that first Easter morning we need to pay special attention to his words as he meets us, and hands over the “package”: ***“Don’t be afraid.”***

In the Gospels, when the major events of salvation are announced, God employs the medium of a delivery man, an angel. And before the “package” is handed over the “delivery angel’s” divine message is always the same: ***Don’t be afraid.*** Don’t be afraid Zechariah. Don’t be afraid Mary. Don’t be afraid Joseph. Don’t be afraid shepherds. Don’t be afraid Mary of Magdala and Mary your companion. Don’t be afraid people of St. Cecilia. Don’t be afraid.

Following this announcement comes the handing over of the “package” of Easter Sunday, **“the one you are looking for is not here, but has been raised from the dead”**. It is also accompanied by a command as they “sign off” on the “package”; **go tell his disciples**”. The contents of the “package” and its accompanying command, constitute the essence of Christian life--**Jesus is risen! Go forth and teach all nations**. Neither the “package” nor the command, however, takes all doubt or the fear of the women away. They remain awe-struck and puzzled by what they’ve seen and heard. However, it does enable them to keep faith amid their fears, and gives them the impetus to do their duty, sharing the good news in spite of their anxiety. It gives them the gift of courage. This is Easter’s gift to them, and to us. Some may preach professing faith in Christ and his resurrection should (or will) smooth all the rough places of life, still the tremors of our world, remove all doubt. I believe the gospel and the Easter message gives us the ability to keep our faith secure and enables us to persevere, and even to flourish, when life is difficult as it is now.

“Do not be afraid.” Why? Because Jesus’ resurrection changes everything. In the resurrection, we have the ultimate proof of God’s covenant love for us—life is stronger than death, love is greater than hate, mercy overcomes judgment, the sufferings and difficulties of this life are, in the end, transient even, if for now, hidden from our eyes.

Fear and joy, despair and hope, doubt and faith, are two sides of our lives in this world this Easter morning. Like the holy women, the angel “delivery man” comes to us today with his God-sent greeting and “package”: ***Don’t be afraid. Christ is risen. Alleluia!***

*12 April, 2020
Father Jim
Alicia*