

GOSPEL MESSAGE

April 8, 2023

RESURRECTION OF OUR LORD, VIGIL OF EASTER

Rising Alleluias

Tonight, alleluias rise in the assembly as we proclaim the great good news that birthed the church: “Jesus Christ is risen!” Before we greet the gospel story, we are immersed in sacred stories from the Hebrew Scriptures that testify to the ways that God has worked, again and again, to bring life out of death. This is the same God who rolls the stone away. Immersing ourselves in these stories of salvation forms us to be a people who trust in a saving, loving God. Some of us will surround baptismal candidates tonight as they are immersed in yet another way: washed in the waters of God’s promises, they are drenched in God’s love and joined to Christ’s death and resurrection. There are so many reasons to shout—Alleluia!

And yet . . . when Mary comes to the tomb early in the morning, the word *Alleluia* could not be further from her lips. No part of Mary expects to find a risen Jesus. Even though she likely heard Jesus predict his death and resurrection as she followed him with the other disciples, how could she have understood the impossible? Witnessing Jesus die in such a devastating, brutal way must have seemed so conclusive—it seemed that the powers of death and sin had won out.

How often do we feel like Mary, weeping outside the empty tomb? Her story reminds us that the risen Christ comes to each one of us, just as we are. We may be sorrowing, doubting, confused, or alone tonight. To us, the risen Christ comes. He calls each one of us by name, blessing us to become witnesses to the resurrection. Tonight, may we see the Lord as Mary does, present in the midst of the assembly, in word and water, wine and bread, in the love we show and the peace we share. And from the depths of our being, may alleluias rise.

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