

Pastoral Message – April 2019

*“They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they went in they did not find the body. While they were perplexed about this, suddenly two men in dazzling clothes stood beside them. The women were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, “Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you, while he was still living in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again. Then they remembered his words, and returning from the tomb, they told all this to the eleven and to all the rest.” – Luke 24:2-9*

Neighbors in the Resurrected Christ,

Grace and peace to you from our Triune God, and the promises that have been given to us during the end of our Lenten Season and the beginning of our Easter rejoicing! Nevertheless, I write to you and bare witness to you still deeply immersed in our time of repentance and self-reflection during these forty days. Here we are called to turn back to our Lord, give away the sin and wrongdoing we have done, open our heart to be filled with unconditional love and forgiveness, and reflect on the baptism we all share with one another; this includes the same baptism that our Lord Jesus Christ received in the Jordan River. Our Lenten journey continues alongside our Lord to His cross – knowing and recognizing the triumphal entrance into Jerusalem, only to be hanging from a Roman symbol of death given to the worst of the worst just a few days later.

Still, we look to the cross on our brow. We long for the spiritual renewal that flows from the springtime Easter feast that is soon to come. However, as it has been said, we still need to get through Good Friday in order to celebrate on the Easter morning. Through the pain of condemnation, sacrifice and ultimately a horrible and painful death comes the gift of salvation and the eternal promise of new life. Honor, praise, and thanksgiving proclaims the Good News that has been fulfilled, trust is restored for those who question what we ultimately cannot understand, and growth once again comes from what has died or what we have hidden in our lives. Let go and give away to God that which you cannot control, and let your cup be filled again.

The gift and promise of Easter also calls us to be like those women who came running back to the disciples of Jesus. Just as they proclaimed the empty tomb and Jesus' resurrection, so are we called to do the same. There was mass confusion, but the women told the men what they heard – that He would return to Galilee and again show himself where He began His ministry. And Jesus' ministry is what we are called to reveal with our family and friends, especially to those who have never heard the story...the remarkable story which we celebrate every week during worship. This is a true revelation of what He told to all – so let us do the same!

I encourage you, my beloved, to go into a place of renewal and recognize what is around you: the green of the grass returning to our lawns, the trees budding once again springing new life to what we adore, flowers of many colors darting out of the ground, warm breezes as the temperatures rise, and the freshly tilled soil that hopefully has recovered from the melting snow and settled water in the fields around us. But also reflect in your own lives how Christ's resurrection has defeated death and the grave, where we are given the forgiveness of sins, and how the body and blood we share in Holy Communion is given and shed for us...on an individual basis. Christ's resurrection, in my opinion, is the greatest event to happen in our human history and we are called to share in that miracle. Be the love and celebrate it with others.

I look forward to seeing you in the remaining Lenten Wednesday evening worships, on Sunday mornings, throughout Holy Week, and early in the early morning as we celebrate the Resurrection of our Lord. The peace of the resurrected Christ be with you all!

In His sake,

Rev. Erik Karlson

Pastor, Neighbors in Christ Parish