

Go and Tell
Acts 10:34-43; Matthew 28:1-10
April 24, 2011

*⁵But the angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid; I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified.⁶He is not here; for he has been raised, as he said. ...**go quickly and tell** his disciples, ‘He has been raised from the dead, and indeed he is going ahead of you ...’;⁸So they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy...⁹Suddenly Jesus met them and said, “Greetings!” And they came to him, took hold of his feet, and worshiped him.¹⁰Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid; **go and tell** my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me.” (Mt. 28)*

“Do not be afraid; go and tell.” On today we celebrate the resurrected Christ and on today these are the words we hear, “*do not be afraid; go and tell.*” We know that in the resurrected Christ we find new life, new possibilities, and new hope. But, what has happened to **get us to this day? This, Easter Sunday, a day in which we** celebrate that Christ has risen, Christ is risen indeed! We must first allow ourselves to go back a few days. Maundy Thursday, the day before Good Friday, is the day in which Christians remember the Last Supper that Jesus had with the disciples, including the women, at which time Jesus also gives us a new commandment, “*that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another.*” (Jn. 13:34) Following that meal as Jesus goes out to the garden at Gethsemane to pray, he is arrested. We know that he is taken before Pilate and before the crowd, found guilty, and sentenced to crucifixion. Jesus was spat upon, beaten, had thorns **placed upon his head, experienced torturous pain and humiliation.** The day of his crucifixion, the day in which Jesus gave up his life, is known to us as Good Friday. As he hung upon the cross that day Jesus cried out, in his human pain and anguish, “*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*” (Mt. 28:46) Good Friday was the day in which the earth shook, rocks were split, and Jesus breathed his last breath

before being taken down from the cross and placed in a tomb. All this as the women, and others who followed Jesus from Galilee, stood in the distance watching.

Then comes Holy Saturday. "Holy Saturday is the time in between death and resurrection, fear and hope, pain and comfort. Holy Saturday is the valley of grief and uncertainty, for us and for Jesus' first disciples." (B. Epperly) From time to time we live Holy Saturday moments. We experience Holy Saturday moments when someone we love has been **diagnosed with cancer, when we hear the word "terminal."** We experience those Holy Saturday moments when someone we love dies. We live those Holy Saturday moments when our partner asks for a divorce, when our children decide to walk down a path we know will only cause them pain, when we see a loved one struggling with addiction. We live Holy Saturday moments when we lose our job and wonder if, in this economy, we will find gainful employment again. If you live, life brings you Holy Saturday moments. A time of fear and hope, pain and comfort, **grief and uncertainty, a time in which we must live with** "what next!"

We move through these three Holy Days, or Easter Triduum, of grief, loss, doubt, and uncertainty, to arrive at today, Easter Sunday. Today we are the "other Mary" who joins with Mary of Magdela approaching the tomb of Jesus. What do you expect to see as you approach the tomb? **Certainly you are not expecting another** earthquake and most assuredly you are not expecting an angel to greet you saying, "Do not be afraid, go and tell the disciples Jesus has been raised from the dead." (Mt. 28: 5, 7) In the wake of Jesus on the cross on Good Friday asking the question, "**My God, my God, why have you forsaken me,**" and our Holy Saturday grief and doubt, we are told on Easter to not fear and to go and share the good news with others that Jesus is resurrected! I do not blame you if you are thinking at this moment, "You're kidding, right!" But, no, it is here that we find the hope that is the Easter message. It is here that we find new opportunities and new life in Christ!

Easter says to us move beyond your fears and doubts. We are called to live resurrected lives. As Easter people we are to proclaim the power of hope to a

desperate and needy world around us. Other than ourselves, who are the desperate and the needy around us? We of course continue to look to our brothers and sisters in Japan and Haiti who **know firsthand what it is to live through the terrors of an earthquake**. We also can look closer to home to our sisters and brothers in Merrill as they continue to clean up after the tornado that ripped through there a couple of weeks ago. These are people who continue to walk through the rubble around them **giving thanks that they survived their ordeal but**, understandably, are asking the question, “Why God?” We can get even closer to those who are desperate and needy when we think of the needs of our brothers and sisters who take shelter or seek meals and other services **from the Salvation Army Hope Center**. We join with others in our community offering them a meal and providing clothing and other needed items as they request them. Closer still to us are the individuals and parents who contact our church for assistance because they need to get to a job **interview, need help with buying food, help with getting their** medications, or help to take their child to Marshfield for medical appointments. It is in our prayers, in our giving, and our presence that we live what it means to be an Easter people. In reaching out we offer new hope and new possibilities!

Sister Helen Prejean, who most of you may know as the nun in the movie “Dead Man Walking,” travels the country telling her resurrection story as she ministered to Patrick Sonnier, among many others, on death row. Patrick was found guilty in the assault and murder of two Louisiana teens. Sister Helen speaks to her fears and how fear kept her from meeting the parents of these murdered teens until a pardon board hearing. Their parents were there to seek the death penalty and Sister Helen was there to **plead for mercy for Patrick, a man that she describes as an** arrogant racist, admitted rapist, and murderer. Not exactly someone that society says is worthy of mercy, new hope or new opportunities, as found in the resurrected Jesus. **Yet, here she was doing exactly that in the presence** of parents who carried unimaginable grief and rage toward the men who took their children’s lives. There is

so much more to the story and if you have the opportunity to read the book or to actually hear Sister Helen, I encourage you to do so. But of profound significance to me is how both Sister Helen and Patrick experienced a new life in that season and in their relationship with one **another**. **She found that he was not so hard around the edges** the more she visited him and she grew in faith as she continued to visit him. On the day that he was to be executed Patrick told her that she did not have to be present at his execution, as Spiritual Advisors are allowed to do, but she said the following to him, “No, no, Pat, if they kill you, I'll be there.” She could not bear the idea of him dying alone. She continued to say to him, “You look at my face. Look at me, and I **will be the face of Christ for you. ...Don't you worry**. God will help me.”

Now I don't imagine that any of us will be called to be with someone on death row at the time of their execution, but Easter says to us that we are to be the face, hands, heart, feet and legs of Christ in each other's lives, trusting God to help us along the way. In the resurrected Christ, Jesus sends us out into the world to share the Good News, to be bearers of hope and new life that we find in him. In our encounter with the resurrected Christ who meets us at the tomb we are reminded that death no longer is the end for us. Victory has already been won and all we have to do as Easter people is claim it. *“What an awesome responsibility, that we are meant to be the Christ-bearers in this world! We are not meant only to own his name, to pray to him, to be objects of devotion. We are meant to be Jesus in the **world, not simply performing tricks or doing good works**. People who have never seen Jesus Christ are to see him in us. What a responsibility! What a frightening task! What a glorious opportunity!”* (Rev. Peter Gomes)

As Easter people we are messengers of renewed and ongoing hope. The late Rev. Peter Gomes said this: “A friend once asked me, ‘If the Christian faith were an indictable offense, would there be enough evidence to convict you?’ Think about that. If all the world were to learn **about Jesus Christ through us, what would they know?**” What hope, what possibilities for a new life, for a better tomorrow, would

your faith in Christ offer those searching, those in need? We are to be an Easter **people, a people who give witness to the resurrection of Jesus.** We are to go and tell in courage and not in fear!

Wendell Berry describing what life looks like if Christ is risen, writes:

So, friends, every day do something
that won't compute. Love the Lord.
Love the world. Work for nothing.
Take all that you have and be poor.
Love someone who does not deserve it...
Ask the questions that have no answers...
Laugh.
Laughter is immeasurable. Be joyful
though you have considered all the facts...
Be like the fox who makes more tracks than necessary,
some in the wrong direction.
Practice resurrection.

“Practice resurrection, my friends. Refuse to be bound by the closed in tomb of this world and those Holy Saturday moments. Stop making excuses and start doing things boldly. Give yourself to causes that matter, simplify your life so that you can really be present to **it, work to make a difference in this world in the few short** years you are given on this earth.

And keep your eyes open for this Risen Lord—when you read the scriptures or come to his meal of grape and grain or start to pray or begin to serve and as you are in **community with one another. And the hard news of** this morning is that he won't leave us alone in our death or in our life. Jesus won't stop...Opening doors, calling us, saying to us 'Love one another,' confronting us, healing us.

Do not be afraid; go and **tell. Because Christ our Lord is risen today!**
Alleluia.” (The Very Rev. Samuel T. Lloyd III)