

*“On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb. They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. In their fright the women bowed down with 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; he has risen!**” (Luke 24:1 - 6)*

March 30, 2018

Greetings to you.

In my last letter to you at the beginning of Lent, I wrote about gratitude. I said that when Jesus humbly washed His disciples' feet at the Last Supper, He assumed the role of a servant, and taught us how to live as beloved children of God. By the time you read this note, it will be almost Easter. Our gratitude will turn to rejoicing.

Having completed our forty days of Lent during which we considered our lives, our choices and our decisions, we now enter the Easter Season in which the Church rejoices. We rejoice. Jesus will have led us through the soaring highs of Palm Sunday, the desperate and heart-breaking days of Holy Week, the desolation of Good Friday, to Easter joy! With the image of the cross of Jesus still raw in our minds, we shift our focus to the mystery of His empty tomb.

Can you imagine what it must have been like for Mary and Martha and the other women who had planned to prepare the body of Jesus for burial? After the cruel events of Friday, imagine encountering the empty tomb and thinking that the body of their beloved Lord had been stolen. Then imagine hearing the voice of an angel announcing that Jesus was no longer among the dead! Their emotions probably would have ranged from fear and agony to the most wonderful awe and joy when they heard. “He is not here. He is risen!” When they heard this news of Jesus' resurrection, they ran to tell the other Disciples!

For us, Easter is the dawn of a new day where hope is alive! Jesus rose from the dead. He is not in the tomb. God is alive! We serve the living God! Hallelujah! That is the hope of our faith and it fills us with joy. For the next fifty days, the Church celebrates Easter. We can join our voices with those faithful women, and His earliest disciples by acclaiming, “The Lord is risen! He is truly risen!” Jesus is alive and at work in the world today. That is the joyful hope we share in Jesus.

The Easter message that we proclaim is that there is hope for those people who are lost, peace for those who are troubled, and joy for even those who mourn. There is much to live for, and Jesus has shown us how to live, He has shown us the way.

Easter is a whole new way. Easter is the perfect time to consider the path, the way of our lives, and whether it's the way Jesus asks us to go. Jesus calls us to a life of mercy, of generosity and kindness. We are called to be peace-makers, people who act justly and who promote justice for other people. Easter can be a like a signpost inviting us to get our bearings and to live this new kind of life. Jesus has travelled this way.

Terrible things happen in the world. Good people suffer. The tragedies never end. Through the ages, humanity has struggled to make sense of the random nature of evil and suffering. We yearn to know "why". Yet we do not know. We can only believe that Jesus knows, and Jesus is with us because of Easter. Easter is Jesus' story and His invitation to experience life as it was meant to be. As a Church community we are committed to travel the way God has prepared for us, to share the joys and burdens of life, and to marvel at the wonders and surprises that lie ahead. Easter is a defining moment in our lives, a moment when we choose again to take a chance and trust God's plan. Easter is our invitation to discover a whole new way of living.

Happy Easter! Let the Alleluias be sung as we celebrate together, and as we live the Easter message.

Happy Easter! May the Peace of the Lord, given to His Apostles on that first Easter night, reign in our hearts.

I wish you a blessed Easter.

With love and joy, Joan.

Reverend Joan Riding