

“Easter People” - Stephanie Sorge, 4.12.20

It is difficult for us not to be together today. I wish we could be passing the peace and sharing hugs and watching the kids run around the lawn finding Easter eggs while we wait patiently, or not so patiently, for the food that is always so good. I wish we could be together, but we are not.

Mary was by herself, and I bet she wished more than anything that she could have been surrounded by the people she loved, in the community of faith that sustained her through the hardest days of life, but she went to that garden alone. Alone, but not alone.

Like the disciples on the road to Emmaus who were blinded by their tears and unable to recognize Jesus, her tears hide from her the fact that she is in the presence of the one who she holds most dear. When she realizes that it is Jesus, of course she wants to reach out and run to him and hug him. Throw her arms around him or perhaps throw herself down at his feet and once again bathe them with her tears. But he tells her not to touch him.

Right now we long to reach out for the people we love. To share hugs that linger. But we are separated by distance, by quarantine, and in some cases, by death that finds no proper place to grieve. Like Mary.

She wants to touch Jesus but she can't. But as J. Herbert Nelson reminded us, Jesus continues to reach out and touch us. We continue to be held in the hands of a loving God who gave us life, who sustains life, and who holds us in life and in

death. Even when we cannot touch the people we love the most, even when it seems like Jesus is no where to be found, we are held in the hands of the one who loved us so much to become human. To take on the flesh that experiences the same kind of pain, and longing, and love.

There are many great mysteries surrounding this resurrection story, but what might be the most amazing of all is that life can come out of death. Connection can come even when we feel ourselves most alone and least able to touch those we love.

These are difficult days. Not only are we not able to touch each other, we can't grasp what is happening these days, in our lives and in the world around us. We want to grasp something. We want to hold onto something, but we can't. It feels like death. It is death.

But we are Easter people, and we know that there is life beyond death. Life even in the midst of it. We know that we are held in the ever loving arms of God. What we cannot grasp reaches out to touch us. What we cannot hold holds onto us, and sustains us, even in the darkest nights before the dawn has broken.

We are here. The sun has risen but we may still feel that we are in those pre-dawn moments of uncertainty, feeling alone and struggling to grasp whatever we can. But friends, we are an Easter people. We are bound together by bonds that are strong enough to keep us together, even when we are apart.

We are an Easter people, and though we smell the stench of death around us, we proclaim that life is victorious. And so we reach out for the body of Christ. We continue to be the hands of Christ reaching into this world to meet the hurt and the need that we find. We recognize it because we feel it, too.

You may feel as alone as Mary coming to that cold tomb. You may feel as confused as Peter. You may be locked down like the other followers of Jesus, scared of the uncertainty that awaits on the other side of the door. But know this. You are not alone. You are held and carried by the God who continually reaches down to us, the savior who calls us by name, and the Spirit that fills us with the strength and courage we need to continue the journey.

And remember - we are an Easter people. As we reach out as the body of Christ we *become* the body of Christ, declaring that death is dead, that hope triumphs in the midst of despair, and that the love of God made known to us in Jesus Christ has conquered, and will continue to conquer, all things. Hold on to that truth, as we declare together that amazing good news: Christ is risen. He is risen indeed!