

Easter Sunday 2026  
 April 5, 2026  
 St. Peter's, Hillsdale  
 Cathedral Church of St. Paul  
 Matthew 28:1-10  
 Be at the Cross, Be at the Grave and See

Come holy spirit and enkindle within us the fire of your burning love. In your most blessed name, we pray. Amen.

They were there, when Joseph of Arimathea claimed his broken, bloody body and laid him in his family tomb. Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were there, when the stone was rolled and the tomb was sealed. They were there. They saw him dead.

I want for a moment for us to put ourselves there, our faces to the cross; to see his pain, feel their loss, and know that we and people throughout our communities, in our country and around the world, we who have seen state sanctioned violence understand. We honor and acknowledge the trampling of humanity. We know that pain.

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As the sun hits the horizon, at dawn, on the first day of the week, Mary and the other Mary, the ones who had been there and watched Joseph of Arimathea place Jesus' broken, bloody body in the tomb. After the Sabbath, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary return to the tomb They go to wash their dear friend's body, to anoint his wounds, to touch his skin one last time. They go to the tomb.

As they approach the tomb, the earth shakes, the stone rolls, the guards faint and a messenger of God, in dazzling white sits down on top of the stone that has rolled. As you do. And his says, in an ever-helpful pastoral way, "Don't be afraid."

"I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here. He has been raised. Just as he said. Come take a look around."

I have no idea how they have the courage to do so, but the women crouch down, crawl in, feel their way through the dead air. Even in the shadows they can see, what isn't there, the absence of a presence. No broken, bruised body, no bloody remnant of a human soul, only a stained linen wrapping, stowed in a corner.

They scrunch back out, the angel says, he reminds them of their call, the angel reminds them of what they know. The angel says, "Hurry, go and tell his disciples, he has been raised from the dead, he is going on ahead. To Galilee, just as he said."

So, they hurry away. They run to tell the disciples.

I can see them in my mind's eye running: the oils dropped, the baskets tossed, the spices left behind. I can see them running and figuring out, as they make their way to that place where they had the supper with Jesus, I can see them wondering, what, what in heaven's name are we going to say to Peter, James and John? What words can we offer, that will move the apostle's souls, and convince them, to leave their place of hiding and go to Galilee?

As they pound down the pavement, there he is, Jesus. Jesus, standing, breathing, greeting them. There is Jesus, and now the women who thought they would only touch his cold, dead skin, now they grab his feet. They fall to the ground, in fear and joy and flabbergasted, insanity, for their legs will not hold them anymore. They fall to the ground and grab his feet and feel the beating pulse in his ankle, the heat of his skin, warms their souls. He is here. He is not gone. They are not alone.

Oh, my friends, think for one moment what it would be like to hold one more time the warmth of someone we have lost. Who for you? Who do you long to see? Whose hand do you want to hold? My mom's hands, with her freckles and veins. To touch her face, wrinkled and worn but her blue eyes, gleaming, glittering maybe tearing. Her smile on her face. I can hear her delighted laughter. I feel her arms wrap around me and I know. I know. I have hope.

And then Jesus says to them, as they wrap their arms around his life, Jesus says what the angel said before, the words we need now in our world to hear, "Don't be afraid, Don't be afraid." "Tell my brothers I am going to Galilee. There they will see me."

What does this mean? In this time of pain, war, polarity and grief? What does all of this mean?

It means we are here. It means some 2000 years later we are here, telling the story of that day, of that festival day, 2000 years now we tell the story, because something so transformative happened that morning that even in time it does not dissipate. Through war and grief, famine, plague, insanity and stupidity, the story remains. And so our hope does not die. Our fears may rise, our strength may ebb, but our hope, remains. What is hope?? In our world? Sometimes I need reminding. Hope.

Best definition that I've heard as of late, is from my colleague and friend, The Rev. Canon Ellen Ekevag, "Hope," she says, "Hope is the stubborn trust that God is not finished. Even in the shadow of the cross, God is already at work bringing life out of death."

"Hope is the stubborn trust that God is not finished." Resurrection means there is always something more. He got up. "Go, I will meet you in Galilee."

We need be with the pain, sit with the pain, and face the insanity of our world and friends when we do, it is there that we will encounter Resurrection. If we are not at the tomb we will not know what is going on.

We may think our dreams are dead, our longings gone and that we've been forgotten, but even in the shadow of the cross, in the killing fields, and the valley of dry bones, we have a stubborn trust that we have not been forgotten. Sometimes we remember and sometimes we need to hear it from another. The angel said...the women told them...

All we need do is dare to see the pain, to be like the women and bear witness to the insanities, to go and to be, to be with each other, holding one to another, to not hide.

Our call is to go. Our call is to bear witness and to go. We go one more step, one more bit, one more day, we go, seeking the Holy, for it is there we will find God. Even if in our minds eye it is to say goodbye. We go to the grave. And there we see, the absence of his presence and know that he is alive.

Our Hope is in the name of the Lord  
Blessed be the name of the Lord  
From this time forth and  
forever more.

Alleluia, Christ is Risen.  
The Lord is Risen indeed. Alleluia.