

**Sunday, April 8, 2012 – Easter Sunday**  
**Rev. Diane Monti-Catania**

**Sermon – “You are the Resurrection!”**

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Easter Sunday.

The holiest day of our liturgical year.

The day when we come to understand the power of God’s love.

The day when human and divine intersect and explode in a mystery so profound as to shape our faith for two thousand years.

This morning we focus on the resurrection story that defines our faith.

It is a story beyond our imaginations.

It is a story that begs us to embrace the mystery of God’s power.

It is a story that speaks directly to our hearts.

We journey with the women going to the tomb that first Easter morning. We feel their deep grief at the loss of their beloved.

We understand that their attention is focused solely on the tasks at hand.

We know from our own lives that grief is like that.

When someone that you love has died – your attention becomes laser sharp on the details that must be attended to.

You become unaware of what is going on around you.

You are wrapped in your grief and you are not distracted by the world around you.

Your motions are automatic, routine, reflexive.

Mary Magdalene, Mary and Salome were no doubt in shock.

All they could think about this morning is that Jesus’ body must not be left unanointed.

Early in the morning, the three women approach the tomb bearing precious herbs and oils to wash the body of their Lord.

They have come to comb out Jesus' hair, to sponge away the dried blood, to massage precious myrrh into his skin.

They hope to engage in the ritual act, the act of care, that is traditionally done before sealing a body in the tomb.

They have come to anoint the crucified one.

Anointing was a symbolic act believed to introduce a sacramental or divine influence, a spirit, at the time of death.

Anointing conveyed sacredness.

The word Messiah comes from the Greek word *Mashiah*, meaning the “Lord’s anointed.”

As the women made their way to the tomb their thoughts were on their grief and their responsibility.

They were not paying attention to what was going on around them.

So it was with confusion that they noted that the stone was rolled back and alarm when they saw a man dressed in white sitting in the tomb.

“Do not be alarmed; you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; he is not here...He is going ahead of you to Gailee; there you will see him.”

Words from an angel.

Mark tells us that the women heard the words with terror and amazement and that in their fear they told no one.

In the original text, this is the ending of Mark’s gospel.

There is no follow up, no meetings with the risen Christ.

We, however, know differently.

We have the advantage of the other three gospel narratives, as well as the writings in Acts of the Apostles and the letters of Paul.

We know that from this day forward the lives of all involved were transformed.

We know that God’s amazing power in resurrecting Jesus Christ touches each one of **our** lives.

We know that we are an Easter people, believing beyond the end of Mark’s gospel.

A few weeks ago I was at a clergy gathering and a colleague mentioned that he had briefly served in a part of the world where Easter is in the Autumn.

I started thinking about how often we translate the resurrection story into one of Springtime renewal.

We look out the window at the daffodils and say “God is making all things new.”

Our Easter Halleluiahs are sung in the bright morning sunlight.

But what if the days were getting shorter and the leaves were dying?

What if Easter was the gateway to months of cold and darkness?

Would the message be the same?

Would we have to turn to other symbols to celebrate the resurrection story?

Could we turn inward?

Can we look at *ourselves* and see the created splendor – the awesome work of God.

Can our hope be born of belief in personal transformation as easily as being couched in nature?

I want us to believe as strongly in personal resurrection as we do in biblical resurrection.

Writer John VanDlar argues “resurrection is not just something that happened to Jesus.

It is something that has always been built into the universe and that touches every part of creation.

You and I, heaven and earth, animal and plant - we are all resurrected, and we all participate in resurrection life.”

“Resurrection,” he argues, “is not so much an event as it is the basic, underlying principle of all life.”

Resurrection is not so much a past miracle as it is a present, lived reality.

A source of hope for the future - whatever it may hold, both this side of the grave and beyond.

Resurrection is not just something we receive, but a moving, motivating force that turns us into life-givers carrying life into our world in whatever way we can.”

This Easter, I want us to feel the awesome power of God in our everyday lives.

We profess to believe in the risen Jesus Christ and the coming of the Holy Spirit and certainly our lives have been touched by encounters with angels, with Spirits, with God.

God’s grace has touched each one of us in some way.

We must celebrate those personal encounters the same way we celebrate this holy day of Easter.

God has the power to break through our barriers of indifference and apathy and infuse our souls with divine passion.

We are, individually, each a resurrection story waiting to be told.

Each and every being, created by God, is the recipient of the same wondrous love that was bestowed on Christ that Easter morning two thousand years ago.

A love so deep and so strong that it can overcome evil.

A love so powerful that it can conquer death.

A love so intense that it can manifest itself in the least likely places.

Each one of us has been created with the potential for resurrection.

Whatever force is keeping you trapped in a dark tomb, know that you have the power to overcome it.

You have the power to overcome darkness with light.

You have the power to overcome hate with love.

You have the power to walk out of the tomb.

Let this Easter mark the beginning of your own journey out of darkness.

Remind yourself that you have an opportunity for resurrection.

Mary Magdalene, Mary and Solome went to that tomb shrouded in grief.

They ran from that tomb in terror.

But their terror was turned to joy when they discovered the resurrected Christ.

Let the angel's words speak to you this morning,

“Do not be alarmed; you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; he is not here...He is going ahead of you to Gailee; there you will see him.”

The prophet Isaiah voiced the promise of this day centuries ago:

*On this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well aged wines, of rich food filled with marrow, of well-aged wines strained clear.*

*And he will destroy on this mountain the shroud that is cast over all peoples, the sheet that is spread over all nations;*

*He will swallow up death forever.*

*The Lord God will wipe away the tears from all faces, and the disgraces of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the Lord has spoken.*

*It will be said on that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, so that he might save us.*

*This is the Lord for whom we have waited; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation.*

*For the hand of the Lord will rest on this mountain.*

Christ the Lord is Risen Today

He has risen indeed!