

## I EASTER 2020

SERMON – SAINT JOSEPH PARISH

FATHER CRAIG LOONEY

*1 ST JOHN 5.4-12 ST JOHN 20.19-23*



Why do we believe in the resurrection of the body and life everlasting? We believe this to be true because of the eyewitness accounts of those who saw Jesus after his resurrection from the dead...and the promise it brings of our own.

The Easter story begins with Mary Magdalene's arrival at Jesus' grave only to find it empty. The actual Resurrection of Jesus isn't recorded...the Gospels give accounts of what happens later.

Saint John includes the encounter between the crying Mary Magdalene and the man she thinks is the gardener. "Stop crying", Jesus tells her, "I'm not the gardener...it's your friend Jesus." Mary recognized Jesus because he called her by name. Jesus calls his friends by their names. Jesus calls us by our names...he knows us and we know him.

Today's Gospel reading finds the disciples hiding out behind locked doors...afraid for their lives because they saw their friend Jesus get murdered and thought they were next. Jesus appears to them...and he didn't knock on the door to gain entrance.

The first thing Jesus says to his disciples is, "Peace be with you." His sudden appearance and ability to walk through a locked door unnerved the disciples. "Peace be with you" really means "Calm down." After he shows them the wounds on his body they are convinced he is their friend Jesus and not a ghost. He says to them a second time, "Peace be with you"... "Calm down."

Jesus breathes on the disciples...the Holy Breath of God...the Holy Spirit...empowering them to spread the Gospel throughout the world. His friends were to be the *apostoloi...the sent out ones...the Apostles...* to preach love and forgiveness to the world. They were the first bishops of the Church...and our own bishops are in a direct line of Apostolic Succession from them...to carry on the faith once delivered to them.

What makes the eyewitness accounts of the Jesus' Resurrection so believable are the eyewitnesses themselves. They were ordinary

people like us...they are the ones Jesus chose to carry on his work.

Mary Magdalene was plagued by demons and after Jesus healed her she became one of his closest followers. She was one of the women present at the Crucifixion and she became Jesus' Public Relations Officer after the resurrection.

Then there is Peter. He was a fisherman by trade with a basic education...and like his friends James and John often acted impulsively without thinking about the consequences of his actions. But Peter would go on to serve the Jerusalem Church well.

What about our friend Thomas...he had his doubts? He demanded proof Jesus had risen from the dead. He got the proof he asked for when Jesus appeared again and told him to touch his wounds. Jesus told Thomas to set his doubts aside and believe. Jesus asks us to do the same...and we join with Thomas and say, "My Lord and My God."

They were ordinary people like us. That makes the Easter story all the more compelling. Their Easter experience was of the first kind. Our Easter experience is through their witness accounts of the risen Lord. Our Easter experience is also through our witness to each other.

Jesus is the Prince of Life...he is THE LIGHT that overcomes the despair of sin and darkness of death and replaces it with forgiveness and light and life. It's the return of that light we celebrate on Easter morning and will continue to celebrate until Pentecost.

The Apostles would have to wait until Pentecost before they would fully understand the meaning of the Resurrection of Jesus...and what it means for them, for us, and for the world.

Until that day...we love our Friend Jesus and praise him and celebrate the glad surprise of his return. While our Easter experience this year was very different it is not over...it is still Easter.

We can still say...He is Risen! Alleluia!

