

Alleluia, Christ is risen!

During our Vigil we heard once again the great first story of the creation from the book of Genesis. This is a beautiful, meaningful and theological text. Its purpose is to explain where the universe as we know it comes from. In the beginning, out of love, God created the world and all that is in it. Forget the days of creation, forget mankind created from the earth, and look at the big picture offered by this story: our world was created by a loving God who blessed all parts of this creation. God saw it was good. To know that there is a divine and loving design that sustains the whole universe is good news to me. Once again this book has never been written to give scientific explanations, but using poetry, people of faith in the One God, wrote this spiritual and theological story to strongly proclaim that God the creator is a powerful and loving God who has blessed the whole creation and humankind since the very beginning of the world.

But we know, don't we, that our world is not perfect. We know, don't we, that human beings have a tendency to follow their own ways rather than the ways of God. The Bible through many stories let us know the struggles of the people of God, their stubbornness to not follow God's ways and to take advantage of each other. From Abraham to Moses, from David to Jesus, God sent so many people to lead God's people and to remind them of God's covenants. But people had problems listening. Even after the first Passover and the liberation from Egyptian slavery to freedom, the people of Israel had trouble to follow the Covenants. Again and again God sent messengers and prophets to remind God's people that they should love their God with all their hearts, respect each other, and care for the least of the society.

We began this service in the darkness, a reminder of both the physical darkness of the universe before the creation of the world, and the spiritual darkness of human sin that puts an invisible curtain between God and us. From the darkness the light has shone, the light of creation, and the light of the Risen Lord sign of a new creation

reconciled with its Creator. This light, the light of Christ, can not be extinguished! This light will shine forever, both in the world, and in our hearts because, Alleluia, Christ is Risen!

When we proclaim that Christ is Risen, what do we mean exactly? We proclaim that Jesus of Nazareth is now the Risen Lord, We proclaim that the one who was crucified has entered in God's glory. We proclaim that the Crucified is the Son of God. We proclaim that Christ is alive in God and present in the world. Present forever in our lives. Alleluia, Christ is Risen!

The resurrection is no theory, this is not a doctrine, this is not a fairytale, this is not an ideal to attain either. The resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ is a fact. The One who was crucified out of a love beyond understanding has been raised by God the Creator of all things visible and invisible. The Resurrection is literally the beginning of a new creation. A creation restored, renewed, and conformed to God's dreams for God's beloved children. With the resurrection a new future is not only possible but already present and offered. With the resurrection of the Lord a new light has been shed in our world shining especially in the darkest places of the world where more love is needed. With the resurrection of the Lord a new light has been poured out in every human heart and is trying to shine from our hearts for those around us when we are willing to look for this light and to share it. When we are willing to look for this light and share it by conforming our lives to Jesus' teachings, our own lives shine and become light for those around us, and our lives themselves proclaim Alleluia, Christ is risen!

When we proclaim that Christ is Risen, we proclaim that since his resurrection a new life has been offered to all. Not only eternal life after our death, but also eternal life we can experience today, eternal life that begins today. Eternal life that we can experience each time we see an act of love, an act of kindness toward a neighbor and especially toward someone in need. Eternal life we can experience when we work for more justice in our society and the world. Eternal life we can experience

when we work for peace and reconciliation among us, in our community, and in the world.

When we proclaim that Christ is Risen, we do not proclaim that Jesus Christ is now sitting in a far remote place in Heaven. Rather we proclaim that Christ is present, alive, actively and really present in our lives, in the world, working within us and helping us to do God's will. At the same time we proclaim that the Risen Lord is especially present in the faces of those who suffer, the poor, the stranger, the oppressed, the needy, the prisoner, because Jesus of Nazareth told his disciples that whatever we do to the least of our brothers and sisters we do it to him. If we want to see the Risen Lord, if we want to love him and serve him, we are called to love and serve those in need around us.

Easter is the promise of eternal newness today and forever, here on earth as we are struggling to follow Christ's teaching, and there beyond the curtain of death. Because Jesus' resurrection destroyed death and its consequences. Since then, all are alive in Christ both here and after our passing in eternal life in Christ. And for that we can express our joy with the traditional Easter greeting: Alleluia, Christ is Risen!

What is the resurrection? This is a fact, a reality. An incredible event with incredible benefits for the world. A powerful act of God. An event that changes human lives when accepted. A reality that the disciples and the first generation of Christians proclaimed boldly even when they were persecuted. They could not stop sharing the Good News of the Risen Lord. But the event of the resurrection can only be understood through faith. Without faith the resurrection does not make any sense, and it is why so many people can not understand and accept the resurrection. The resurrection can not be proven. The resurrection can only be experienced and then accepted.

The two women who came to honor Jesus' body could not understand that their beloved friend and master was resurrected. They received this message: *"You are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised up: he is not here. Look there is the place*

they laid Him.” This is the Easter message in all its simplicity: the One who was crucified has been raised, he is not there anymore. Yet, this first announcement is not received with joy and cheerings at first, only with fear and amazement. It was too soon, it was too new, it was too unexpected for the women to understand what had just happened to Jesus.

This first announcement of the Resurrection is followed by a sending in mission, *“Go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you.”* There is no sign of the resurrection, there is no proof of the resurrection, we can only experience the result of the resurrection: the Lord Jesus Christ is alive and active in the world and in our lives. We too are invited to follow him in Galilee, meaning all the areas of our lives and of the world that need repair and changes; all the areas of our lives and the world where people are being abused or taking advantage of; all the areas in our lives and in the world where the dreams of God for a just world, a just society are still only dreams and not reality. In these gray parts of our lives and the world, the Risen Lord is actively present and working. He is waiting for us to join him and to bring his light everywhere.

Alleluia, Christ is Risen, so now, let us go forth in the world, proclaiming the Good News of Jesus’ Resurrection. Let the light of Christ shine in our lives. Let the light of Christ shine at St Luke’s. Let the light of Christ shine in the word! Shine Jesus, Shine in us. Shine Jesus, shine in the world. Let us shine, because Alleluia, Christ is risen! Amen.