

THE
Episcopal
CHURCH



APRIL 5, 2015 – EASTER DAY

AN EASTER MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDING BISHOP

It's still dark when Mary ventures out to find the tomb. The graveyards around Jerusalem don't have much greenery today. The earth is mostly rock and stone, and it is far from easy to make a place to secure a body. Jesus' body was put in a cave-like space, with a stone rolled across the opening to close it up. Mary has made the journey from wherever she's sheltered over the last day, through darkened streets, perhaps hearing cocks begin to crow and townspeople start to stir.

She nears the place, but somehow it seems different than they left it – this can't be it, can it? Who moved the stone? A trip begun in tears and grief



CC photo by Myri Bonnie

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now has added burden – confusion, anger, shock, chaos, abandonment. His very body has been stolen.

She runs to tell the others. The three tear back to the tomb – no, the body is not there, though some of the burial cloths remain. Who has torn away the shroud and stolen him away? Why must the cruel torture continue, sacrilege and insult even after death? Who has done this awful thing? The men run away again, leaving her to weep at even greater loss.

She peers in once more – who are these, so bold appearing? “Fear not, woman ... why do you weep?” She turns away and meets another, who says the same – Why do you weep, who are you looking for? This gardener has himself been planted and now springs up green and vibrant, still rising into greater life. He challenges her to go and share that rising, great news of green and life, with those who have fled.

Still rising, still seeking union with Creator, making tender offering to beloved friends – briefly I am with you, I am on my way. Go and you will find me if you look.

The risen one still offers life to those who will look for evidence of his gardening – hope, friendship, healing, reunion, restoration – to all who have been uprooted, cut off, to those who are parched and withered, to those who lie wasting in the desert. Why do we weep or run away when that promise abides?

We can find that green one, still rising, if we will go stand with the grieving Marys of this world, if we will draw out the terrified who have retreated to their holes, if we will walk the Emmaus road with the lost and confused, if we will search out the hungry in the neighborhood called Galilee. We will find him already there before us, bringing new and verdant life. The only place we will not find him is in the tomb.

The Most Rev. Katharine Jefferts Schori
Presiding Bishop and Primate
The Episcopal Church

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