

## ***What is Your Hope?***

Homily – Solemnity of Easter 2021

*Most Reverend Joseph J. Tyson, Bishop of Yakima*

Peace be with you. What is your hope? What is your greatest hope this Easter?

I am keenly aware how many of us are tired of the COVID-19 restrictions. We want to go back to our normal lives. We want to spend time with our families. We want to hang out with friends. We want to eliminate masks. We want to see each other smile. We want the world as it once was.

This is precisely what the women wanted in the twilight of that Easter morning. They were going back with the scented oils to anoint the body of Jesus. He had been tortured to death on a cross. He was dead. They wanted to reverence him and his deceased body with a dignified anointing with scented burial oil. That was their hope.



But when they arrived the heavy stone had rolled away. A man in dazzling white sitting near the tomb told them: "Do not be amazed! You look for Jesus of Nazareth, the crucified. He has been raised. He is not here. Behold the place where they laid him. But go and tell his disciples and Peter...."

Our scientific world view finds it hard to believe that anyone could be raised from the dead. The same was true for Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome. The same was

true for the disciples. Nothing in their world view prepared them for this resurrection from the dead.

Indeed, we know from ancient near eastern mythology that those who came back from the dead, did so in order to take revenge on their persecutors. But this is precisely not what happens in the Gospel. When Jesus does appear to his disciples he counters with the greeting "Peace be with you." Peace. Not revenge.

The event of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead seemed so unlikely and at the empty tomb looked so extraordinary that excitement leaps of the pages of our Gospel. Nothing prepared the disciples for this unexpected event. Nothing prepares us for any kind of resurrection.

Theologian and scripture scholar N.T. Wright notes that the resurrected body is not the same of our earthly body. This is not a resuscitation. No. N.T. Wright puts it this way. Our resurrected body is more real and more solid than the earthly body.

As we know from the details of the gospel, when Jesus appears he goes through locked doors. It is a body that eats fish at the shore of Galilee. How is this resurrected body recognized? Thomas finally recognizes Jesus when he gazes at his wounds.

That same is true for me and you. We will recognize the risen Christ when we gaze at his wounds. Where are those wounds? We get a glimmering of the wounds when we contemplate those who have lost their businesses during the COVID-19 shut down. We can contemplate the wounds of Jesus in those who have lost loved ones during this pandemic. We can contemplate the wounds by the addictions as well as the mental health challenges triggered during this pandemic.

When the women came to the tomb their hope was to find the body of Jesus. But their hope was too small. Is ours? Are we only wanting our old life back? Or are we ready to engage the new world in light of the resurrection of Jesus Christ? Are we ready to see the wounds of Christ in the wounds of others? Are we ready to follow Jesus in forming a joyous community of disciples tending the wounds of the world and announcing the good news that there is more to life than what we can see? Can we point the way that Christ himself animates the care, the service and the compassion of so many during this COVID-19 pandemic?

Paragraph 1000 of the Catechism of the Catholic Church notes that the Eucharist is a foretaste of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Look around. See the great hope lived out in the dedication of those who serve. See the great hope of love that cannot be conquered by death! Happy Easter! Peace be with you!

Art: "The Resurrection of Christ." 1611-12. Peter Paul Rubens, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons.