



ROMAN CATHOLIC ARCHDIOCESE OF REGINA OFFICE OF THE ARCHBISHOP

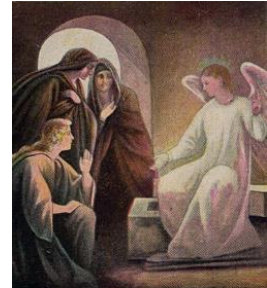
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EASTER 2021

Christ is Risen! Happy Easter, everyone!

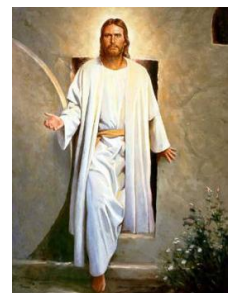
When Jesus first called his disciples, he invited them to leave their homes, the security of their lives, to follow him. And when, after the devastation of his death, they found the stone rolled away, when they found the tomb empty, when the Risen Lord came walking alongside of them, when he showed them his wounded hands and side, their world turned upside down once again. Soon filled with the Holy Spirit, they were sent, with joy, in an entirely new way beyond the bounds of the familiar.



Over the years, I have had a recurring dream. Until a few days ago, I had not thought of this dream as being connected to Easter. Whenever I have had this dream, I have been deeply stirred by it. It comes in two forms. In the first, I am a little child, wondering around in our farmyard, and decide to leave the yard, and to venture out into the field, beyond the safety of the yard. And I find a place there, not too far away, a grove of trees with tall wild prairie grasses, a place of shelter, not far from the farmyard, but a place where I am welcomed, a place where people have dwelt, a beautiful, inviting place.

The other variant of the dream is connected with our little country church of St. Elizabeth's, a few hundred metres from our farmyard. In the dream, this time as an adult, I go out beyond the church yard, past the cemetery, over the slightly more hilly prairies there, and find an old home, a building to explore, a place of discovery.

At one point after having these recurring dreams, I drove out to the home of my early childhood, and to our little country parish, and wondered around, looking for some trace of either of these places, but found none, only beautiful open prairie. The dreams are, strangely, of a treasure hidden in those fields, a treasure connected with the past, as though the land carried its own memories that we can't quite access. Above all, there are of a treasure that we find by leaving the security of home, by leaving the church building and bringing whatever we have received and learned and become, into dialogue and active engagement with the world around us.



To be baptized into the death and resurrection of Christ, to live with a paschal faith, is to be a part of a community that is summoned to go into places of struggle, of suffering, of darkness, and to be - above all by our actions - a witness to life. It is to be a community, as St. Paul describes for the Corinthians, that is "afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be made visible in our bodies" (2 Cor. 4:8-10).

The pandemic has been difficult for us as society, and it has been difficult for us as church. We have had to learn new ways to build up the community, new ways to reach out to others, new ways to evangelize. We have been dragged out of our comfort zones. We've been displaced, and summoned to find a new place in the family of things. Now on this 2nd Easter of the pandemic, having had a year bracketed by two seasons of Lent for something new to gestate within us, I think the Risen Lord, in the power of the Holy Spirit, is speaking a word to us.

Just as surely as the first crew of disciples, fishermen, tax collectors, and what all, went forth into the world empowered by the Holy Spirit, just as surely as these fields behind me - which are now looking rather barren - will soon be a place of growth and beauty and fruitfulness, so too is the Holy Spirit doing something new in us. Any new way will need to be faithful to the wisdom of the past, but that doesn't mean just repeating things the way they have always been. Jesus told his disciples that those trained for the kingdom are "like the master of a household who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old" (Mt 13:52).

That discernment is upon us now in the church. Some aspects of it seem fairly clear. Faithful to the Lord himself, we need to listen deeply to those who are hurt and wounded in our midst, and in a special way to those whose wounds we as church have caused. We need to learn how to accompany in a truly compassionate Christ-like way. We need to be centred on mission. Moulded by the death and resurrection of Christ, we need to engage the world around us, not with anger, not from a perspective of power, but with a spirit of dialogue, a humble willingness to learn, a readiness to inspire, with convictions about the worth and dignity of life to uphold, praying at all times to be led by the Spirit of the Risen Lord.

As in my old recurring dreams, in the world outside our comfort zones we will find human life, with all its suffering and brokenness, its blessings and joys, its varied history and its promise, it's beauty and struggles, its wonder and mystery. Christian discipleship is an adventure, initiated by a God at work in the created world, the paschal work of undoing the power of death, transforming the created order by self-giving redeeming love. Let us embrace it anew.

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and enkindle in them the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created. And you shall renew the face of the earth.



Again, Happy Easter!

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Don Bolen".

+ Donald Bolen
Archbishop of Regina

DJB:bg