

Message for Easter, April 12, 2020  
Rev John Dillon

Reading John's gospel account of that morning, note the sequence of events. The stunning shock of the empty tomb and the missing body goes from Mary

- to Mary rushing to tell Peter and the “other disciple”
- to them running to the tomb and then returning home -(with news they could not possibly have kept to themselves!)
- back to Mary and her exchange with two angels
- to Mary talking to the “gardener” who was Jesus
- to Mary running back to the disciples and uttering those key words ---

”I have seen the Lord.”

**With that phrase and in carrying out Jesus's instructions the shock of the empty tomb and the missing body transforms first into confusion and wonder and then with time into the Good News!**

**This was Good News meant to be shared and meant for all of us!**

**Have we forgotten that Jesus's resurrection was our resurrection?**

Acclaimed Bible scholar John Dominic Crossan and his wife Sarah, a working pastor and keen photographer, have traveled widely studying the roots of our faith. They have visited many of the earliest Christian sites and buildings in Egypt, Italy, Turkey, Syria, Israel and Russia. They have sought out and examined as many early Christian books and documents as they could find.

One document they studied from St. Anastasios of Mt Sinai, written around 680 AD says:

“A most excellent rule of the wisest ones is that material images are stronger, more faithful, and mightier by far than verbal arguments and biblical quotes.”

As they say “a picture paints a thousand words.” This was even more true in a pre-literate society and the church has always used images to teach and explain and invite people to faith.

The Crossans then started to pay more and more attention to the walls that surrounded them as much as the texts stored within those ancient walls.

About 15 years ago they noticed something:

Almost all Western resurrection depictions show Jesus rising up on his own. A divine individual entering new life.

In fact later frescoes and murals do not even show Jesus, they opt for just having an empty tomb. Removing even the central individual and making resurrection more of an intellectual belief than a bodily fact.

But the further East they went the more crowded the Resurrection images became!

Jesus is frequently shown stepping out of the tomb surrounded by a resurrected crowd.

Jesus is shown rising up, hand-in-hand with Adam. Who in turn is holding Eve's hand.

Jesus is shown resurrected in the company of Moses, Isaiah, and other prophets.

Though the Gospel of John does not include it, we do find in Matthew 27:51b-53

51 The earth shook, and the rocks were split.

52 The tombs also were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised.

53 After his resurrection they came out of the tombs and entered the holy city and appeared to many.

And Paul states in 1 Corinthians , “If there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised.”

In the 4th century St.Ambrose of Milan preached “If Christ did not rise for us, then he did not rise at all, since he had no need of it just for himself. In him the world arose, in him heaven arose, in him the earth arose.”

Jesus Son of God, “had no need of it just for himself.”

Jesus rose for us, not for himself.

This Good News was for others, this Good News was to be shared.

Mary could not keep it to herself, Peter and the others could not keep it quiet and they were not supposed to.

“I have seen the Lord” was to be shared with all, was to be shared with us!

Christ is risen, Christ is risen indeed...**not for himself- but for you and me!**

While we celebrate the greatest Good News of all let us not forget it is OUR Good News, it is OUR resurrection.

Mary's words, “I have seen the Lord” is a message meant for each and every one of us in the most intimate, personal way.

“He had no need of it just for himself. In him the world arose, in him heaven arose, in him the earth arose.”

Halleluiah!