

LOVE. TEACH. HEAL.

Our Mission Guided by the Love of Jesus Christ

Easter 2018

Dear Friends in Christ,

Our Lent began with mourning, and that mourning continues. Even as we are inspired by our young people who marched in Washington last Saturday, our hearts are heavy. Even in the light of Easter joy, we still remember the children of Parkland. We grieve with their families. We grieve also for others who die because of our neglect: victims of violence in our neighborhoods, or who die unarmed at the hands of our authorities, others who die daily from addiction or poverty or simple despair. We may not even know their names. And yet, as Christians, we are called to see them as our loved ones—beloved of God and therefore beloved by us—and to grieve them accordingly.



So, mourn we must. And yet, Saint Paul cautions, *do not grieve as those who have no hope*. He warns us not to sink into resignation, not to think for a moment that death has the final word. Christian grief is a mark of Christian love, but is also the gateway to Christian hope. These two, grief and hope, join together to give us *compassion* for those who suffer and *resolve* to correct the conditions that cause that suffering insofar as it lies in our power to do so.

We are taught this from the very beginning of Easter, from the moment before dawn on the Third Day. It is Mary Magdalene who is our teacher. She comes in the darkness to the tomb of her Lord. She finds the stone rolled away, runs to tell Simon Peter and John who return with her, find the tomb empty, and then go to their homes. The men do nothing. They apparently feel nothing. They are resigned. They return to their living rooms and lock themselves away.

Mary alone stays and weeps. She grieves but she is not resigned. She wants to do something, to find His body, to remedy this injustice. Her tears honor her Lord. They are the sign of her love for Him. When Jesus appears, instinctively, she reaches for Him, tries to hold Him, but Jesus tells her she must let him go, for He is ascending to the Father. So she does, returning to the disciples to tell them she has seen the Lord.

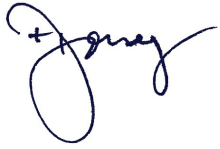
I believe she does so with tears still in her eyes, tears of grief mingled with tears of joy. She loses Jesus in His death, and again in His ascending, but she rejoices in His Resurrection, in His new life. She knows that this changes everything, changes all of life, and she goes to the home of one disciple after another bearing the news that will unlock their own grieving and fearful hearts, that will send them all on the road to turn the world upside down!

From Mary, the first of the apostles, we know that these mingled tears are our inheritance. For our tears of grief at the foot of the Cross, our tears of yearning for the ascended Lord, become tears that join us to the broken hearts of all who suffer, whose wounds Jesus has made His own. And our tears of joy in the Resurrection become, through the Holy Spirit, waters of awakening, refreshing our resolve to make no peace with sin and have no patience with injustice, until the day when God's will is done on earth as it is in heaven.

So let us greet the news of the Risen Lord with shouts of *Alleluia!* And then let us get on the road, renewed and ready to embrace the need of the world, to mourn with those who mourn, to rejoice with those who rejoice, to invite others into a living relationship with Jesus Christ crucified and risen, and to work together in the power of the Spirit for the Kingdom of God which is even now breaking forth all

around us.

Faithfully your bishop,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Dorsey", with a large, stylized loop at the end.

(The Right Reverend) Dorsey W.M. McConnell, D.D.

VIII Bishop of Pittsburgh

April 1, 2018

