

The Episcopal Diocese of Pittsburgh



Easter 2021

Dear Friends in Christ,

It is Easter. Once again, we face the empty tomb of the risen Christ; we stand with the astonished women in Mark's gospel (Mark 16:1-8) and hear the strange and simple words from the young man dressed in white: *he is risen, he is not here.... Go, and you will see him, just as he promised.* And we hear the original ending of the story: *But they ran away from there as fast as they could, for they were shaken — beside themselves! — and they didn't tell a soul, because fear had them by the throat.*

After this year of sickness and violence, as I stand with the women, like them I struggle to find the hope in this scene. How can this young man's message possibly be enough to answer all the death of the last year — the pandemic, the racial violence, the flaring of our divisions? How can this word of Resurrection be enough to bring justice, calm our fear, bind up our broken hearts?

All Jesus' friends say this word is enough: Mary Magdalene, Peter, John, Paul, all believe the stone rolled away is the end of *the shroud that was cast over all peoples, the veil covering all nations*, as the prophet Isaiah foresaw (Isaiah 25:7). The grave of Christ has swallowed up death itself.

So, I listen to the young man once more, especially his final words: *go and you will see him, just as he promised.*

I wonder where I will see Him.

Again his friends have an answer. *You will see him when you give up trying to find a reason to believe. You will see him at the end of your plans, and at the end of your rope. You will see him, like Mary, in the pit of your grief. You will see him in your failure, like Peter, and in your blindness, like Paul. And once you see him, you will know it is all true: this Jesus has been raised from the dead, he who is light and life, mercy and peace, enough for us all.*

Eventually, the women did say something to someone. When they saw him, the risen Christ freed them from their fear. They not only spoke of the hope of the Resurrection: they *lived* that hope, through lives of faithfulness and generosity, compassion and joy, and others saw the risen Christ in them. I look to them and find my own hope restored.

Can we be imitators of these brave sisters this Eastertide? Beyond the great feast, can we live what we sing, and do what we pray, so that others may see Jesus Christ crucified and risen? The friends of Jesus say we certainly can, through the power of God working through us and in us, knowing that the Lord is *with us always, even to the end of the age*. (Matthew 28:20)

Faithfully your Bishop,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Dorsey", with a small cross symbol to the left of the first letter.

(The Right Reverend) Dorsey W.M. McConnell, D.D.
VIII Bishop of Pittsburgh