

## Easter Vigil - 2020

O.T. Readings, Rom 6:3-11; MT 28:1-10

Tonight we experience a rebirth. The rebirth of Jesus to life from the darkness of the tomb, and the promise of rebirth for all those who die and rise with him in Baptism. A rebirth brings with it new life, and transformations - things after a rebirth are not the same as they were before. At this time of pandemic we may wonder what transformations will occur when we experience a type of rebirth after this has ended. We don't exactly know. I have seen articles saying "everything will be different" - so you mean that we won't eat ice cream out of cones anymore and we'll stop driving cars, and sleep outdoors every night? You mean everything will be different? Not everything.

Statements like that come from fear, and we should hear what the angel says to the woman at the tomb who also were wondering if everything will be different now. The angel says *Do not be afraid!* Then directs them to go quickly to tell the others that something has changed, but *Do not be afraid*. Even when we have faith, even when we trust in God, even when we have a confidence that God will bring things around - we can still have some fear. The woman were no different. We heard that *Then they went away quickly from the tomb, fearful yet overjoyed*. This is a wonderful description. They were expectantly looking forward to what God would bring of the future and they had faith, which made them joyful, but they were still a little scared. We all can be scared when we don't know the future - fear of the unknown is a powerful thing.

Jesus comes to us tonight. Jesus comes in the dark of this Saturday evening, he comes in the darkness of our fears and worries, he come at the very time that we expect the "surge" or the worst of this pandemic - he comes in this darkness to give a simple message: *Do not be afraid!* It is the same message he gave to those woman who were fearful but overjoyed. He then promised them: *Go tell [the others] to go to Galilee, and there they will see me*. Just as surely as those disciples did see Jesus when they did as he directed, so shall we see the promises of Jesus fulfilled when we follow where he sends us ... so *Do not Be afraid!*

Will things be different after this rebirth - sure, will everything be different - no - the God that has been with humanity through all of history will still be the same. But we can look forward to what will change with joyful expectation. Just as his own death and resurrection was a rebirth to a newness of life, so too we can follow in our own rebirth to a new life. As Paul tells us today: *We were indeed buried with him through baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead ... we too might live in newness of life*. Jesus death and resurrection brings rebirth to those joined to it in Baptism - and his continued presence during our dark times brings renewal to those who follow. So let us follow him where he sends and *Do not be afraid!*