

A Quarantined Easter

(An Easter Reflection by **Rev. Les Drayer**)

Easter Sunday has always been a day of celebration,
A day of triumph and victorious praise,
Celebrating God who thru the resurrection of Jesus
Overcame death and all evil.
Easter hymns and uplifting music,
Gospel accounts of the first Easter morning,
Triumphal Easter liturgies,
Interpretation and proclamation thru Easter sermons,
All help to make Easter Sunday
One of the best Sundays of the year.

As I look back on over 40 years of ministry,
Many happy memories flood my mind
When I think of Easter:
Churches filled with many happy worshippers,
Singing joyfully,
Choirs outdoing themselves,
With triumphal anthems,
And powerful solos,
Easter scripture readings,
Easter sermons proclaiming the good news...
Often, as I walked to the back of the sanctuary
To greet the happy worshippers,
I was silently shouting out
"Yes!"
Feeling that the service had succeeded
In capturing the true spirit of Easter Sunday...

How different it all will be this Easter Sunday,
April 12, 2020,
With empty church buildings,
Silence rather than joyful praise,
No hymns, anthems or solos,
No Easter liturgy,
No hearing the Gospel reading of resurrection,
No sermons,
Nothing other than the sound of silence.
April 12 won't seem very special,
Being just another day of self-quarantine
And social distancing.

Perhaps it will be a lot more like
The first Easter Sunday of long ago,
Than the Easter Sunday of 2019
And many of the nearly
2000 Easter Sundays
Christians have celebrated thru the years.

What was the first Easter like?
The closest followers of Jesus
Were in a kind of self-quarantine,
Hiding out behind secure, locked doors,
Paralyzed by fear, doubt and despair,
Scared to death that they be the next ones
To die...

The only ones to venture out into the open
Were a small group of women,
Led by Mary Magdalene,
Who ventured to the tomb
Of the dead body of Jesus.
They had no expectation
Of anything out of the ordinary
They simply wanted to honour
The dead Jesus they had so loved,
With the oils and perfumes they brought with them.
They were shocked to find the tomb empty,
And even more shocked by the words they heard,
Spoken by beings they came to regard as angels:
“Why do you look for the living among the dead?
He is not here.
He has been raised...”

The women returned to tell
This incredible news to the other disciples,
Men like Peter and John and the other men.
Their reaction to what the women shared?
The men regarded it as “an idle tale”-
And they refused to believe...

Later that day, two of disciples of Jesus
Were journeying
To a village called Emmaus
When they were joined by a stranger.
The stranger listened as they shared their grief

Over the suffering and death of Jesus,
One whom they had so hoped
Would be the salvation of Israel.
They shared their rejection of what they saw as
The absurd story of resurrection,
As told to them by the women.

The stranger confronted their rejection,
“How foolish you are not to believe...”
He opened their minds to the old scriptures,
Offering new insights about the Messiah,
The One they had so hoped would be
Israel’s salvation.
He pointed not to a triumphant military leader,
But to One who be a suffering servant of God,
And how by his wounds,
Others could be healed
And receive New Hope and New Life.

Then a little later, at Emmaus,
The stranger accepted
The invitation of the journeyers
To stay with them and join them for a meal.
The stranger took on the role of the host.
He took the bread,
Blessed it, broke it,
And gave to them...
Their eyes were opened to realize
Jesus was still with them,
They were not alone
Jesus would always be with them...

The two disciples raced back to the others,
Proclaiming,
“The Lord is risen indeed!”

Easter, 2020-
maybe we can safely gather round a table,
With social distancing or
Via Skype or FaceTime
or some form of technology .
Maybe we can take a some bread
And bless it, break it and share it,
Giving thanks to God that we are not alone,

That there are people who dearly love us
Who will always be there for us
And wherever there is that kind of
Love and compassion present,
Jesus is also present,
His presence unrecognized at first,
But realized and remembered
In a humble act of sharing bread,
And remembering how we are
So loved by the Jesus
Who comes to us still,
And opens our eyes of faith
To his loving presence with always,
Even in the darkest places of life.

Gather safely at a table,
Or via technology.
Share together bread,
giving thanks for our daily bread.
Share together from a bottle of wine-
safely in person or via technology-
Giving thanks
For all the gifts of grace given us.
Celebrate Easter.
Celebrate never-ending life.
Celebrate never-ending love.
Celebrate Jesus.
Celebrate the reality that:
The Lord is risen!
He is risen indeed!

-an Easter reflection inspired by chapter 24 in the Gospel of Luke and the current reality of our world during Easter, 2020.