

Wicker Park Lutheran Church

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It is early morning, still dark, before anyone else has arisen. Mary arrives at the tomb- Christ is not there. Mary starts weeping because the body of Jesus is not where she thought it was. Not only did he die a death of a criminal on the cross, but now it seems his dead body won't even have the dignity to be left in peace.

How much of this year have we spent like Mary, weeping because nothing looks as it should. Covid, social distancing, has caused us immeasurable loss and heartache, it has kept us away from loved ones, away from social activities, away from in-person worship. We haven't experienced Christ in the people and places we normally do. If you are like me, it still- a year later- is hard for me to accept that we are celebrating another Easter in this reality. It's hard to keep myself from looking back, looking at what once was. Or what could have been this year.

Christ was not where Mary thought, but he was there. He was on the move. He appears as what she perceives as a gardener. In a place and in a person she least expects. Jesus informs her that he will be on the move again- he will be ascending with the father and he tells her to go on and tell the others what she has witnessed. Go and tell others what they've seen and heard, that Christ is alive and on the move!!

This night of Easter Vigil we are especially reminded that Christ didn't just stay put in the grave, but he also didn't just stay stuck in history, 2000 years ago. And he

didn't stay stuck in time in March of 2020, before the world as we knew it was turned up side down.

Each Easter Vigil we light the Paschal Candle from a new fire, and we re-inscribe the current year. Last year we inscribed 2020. This year we inscribe 2021. We do not inscribe 33, the year Jesus died, because today we are not just remembering an ancient story- events that happened 2000 years ago. Tonight is about proclaiming and claiming that Christ moves throughout time and space. Christ moves among us and in us today. And each new day, Christ's resurrection continues to show up and manifest in new ways.

So too, we remember the many stories of our faith. We remember God creating the heavens and earth and all that there is out of nothingness and chaos. We remember God using Moses to part the waters of the Red Sea to liberate the Israelites from oppression and exploitation under the Egyptians. We remember God's promise of breathing new life into a valley of death where only the rattling of dry bones is heard.

In these stories, We remember GOD'S mighty acts of creation, rebirth and renewal THROUGHOUT TIME because God MOVES with us throughout time and space, with each new challenge. Each new election cycle. Each new season. Each new school year. Each new birth or death in the family. Each new job. Each new stage of life.

As we processed the candle through the sanctuary, (and as you created your own paschal candle at home) as we moved together through the stories of our faith, and as we have moved through this most holy of weeks together- continuing on to Easter Sunday tomorrow- may we too take this message to others as Jesus instructs Mary. May we run and tell others that here, today, we have seen the Lord! AMEN.