

Homily for Easter, 2014

It begins with an earthquake. Easter begins with an earthquake. Easter begins with power and majesty. For God is cracking open the darkness of death.

And God doesn't end with an earthquake. A daring angel rolls the stone away and sits on it as if it were a throne....glorious in his apparel and more glorious in his enterprise. And this angel has a message to proclaim.

And into this attention-getting scene God places a small group of women. As they journey to the tomb they struggle...they struggle with their grief, their memories, their fears....and one question: who will roll the stone away? They are stunned when they find the stone rolled away and the angel staring at them who says ... "He is not here; he is risen...you have nothing to fear."

And so begins the great message of Easter – the only message of Easter: Jesus Christ who is the same yesterday, today and forever is risen from the dead and is not now nor ever will found among the dead. Jesus Christ is the gift of life...of new life...of life that never ends.

And so the life of these women is changed. Their fear is replaced by joy. Their despair becomes hope. Now they race to share this news with those they know. And in their haste they encounter Christ himself who says to them again: "Do not be afraid." He lets them know that He is coming to them again...that He is coming to bring new life, this new hope, this unending joy.

Fear is a terrible thing...it can imprison us like the tomb that imprisoned Christ. And who doesn't know fear? Fear of failure. Fear that I will be hurt. Fear that I will not know love. Fear that my love will be rejected. Fear that someone I love will be taken from me. Fear that my family or friends will forget me. Fear that life will give me nothing more than exhaustion. Fear that I will never again see those whom I have loved the most and who have been grasped by the hand of death. Fear that I can't make it through the day without a drink or a drug. Fear that I will be forgotten. Fear that I will be a failure. Fear that no one cares about me. Fear that I will die and be frightened to death by death itself. Who will roll away this stone, this fear, that imprisons me in this tomb.

Well the message of Easter is that God rolls this stone. For in Jesus Christ, God is victorious over fear and over death. God is saying to each one of us: don't be afraid. For Christ went to the cross...we need not fear the cross. Christ went to the grave...we need not fear the grave. Christ

has gone into the future....we need not fear the future. Christ inhabits life...we need not fear life. Again and again the message of the victory of Christ shouts out to us....Do not be afraid.

This is what Easter is all about. It is God getting our attention to remind us once again that in Jesus Christ we have nothing to fear. For the “alleluias” we sing are our song of victory. For this is the **feast** of victory. This is the victory of Jesus Christ. This is our victory over death. This is our victory over fear. And in our joy we proclaim that Jesus Christ is risen from the dead and to Him be glory and power and wisdom now and for ever. Amen.