

My Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Each of the eye-witnesses on the New Testament gives differing accounts of Jesus' Resurrection. They all agree that the grave in which he was entombed was empty. But, at first, they didn't know what that meant. As John tells us in his account, "They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead." All they knew was that he was gone. His body was missing. They're confused, afraid. What's going on? Was there a body snatcher?

Then the stories come tumbling in. Mary has a conversation with a man whom she thinks is the gardener and when he addresses her, "Mary!" she recognizes that it is Jesus. He is risen! On that same day, two disciples on the road to Emmaus, perhaps fleeing Jerusalem for fear of their lives, encounter a stranger to whom they tell of the events that put them on that road. The stranger explains the Scriptures to them in a way that attracted them. They invite him to share a meal with them. Then, they recognize him in the breaking of the bread. It is Jesus! He is risen! Then, later that evening, in a room behind locked doors, all of a sudden, he is there. He shows them the scars in his hands and his feet. It's really him! It's Jesus! He is risen! What an amazing story! Jesus' followers go from hopelessness, despair, and fear to astounding joy, heart-pounding jubilation all within the bounds of a single day.

It is that joy, that jubilation that still resounds today...more than 2000 years later. The proclamation of that joy began this morning somewhere in New Zealand with the pealing of Church bells. Then it was carried by jubilant voices raised by millions of believers in Asia and Africa. Then it swept across the great cathedrals of Europe, and now we, here in North and South America, join our voices, and the joyful news of Easter sounds deep and full and wondrous all over the world. He is alive! ALLELUIA! He is alive! ALLELUIA! He is alive! ALLELUIA!

Let's consider for a moment what that means to us. Because he lives, I can face tomorrow. ALLELUIA! Even if you're suffering depression, repression, or oppression—because he lives, you can face tomorrow. ALLELUIA! If you're unemployed, underemployed, or even working too darn hard—because he lives, you can face tomorrow. ALLELUIA! If your marriage is a challenge and your kids or grandkids are driving you crazy—because he lives, you can face tomorrow. ALLELUIA!

Because he lives, all fear is gone. ALLELUIA! No cancer, no diabetes, no chronic pain need defeat you. ALLELUIA! No alcoholic or drug addicted spouse or child can overwhelm you. ALLELUIA! No financial concern in the present or for your future can steal your peace of mind. ALLELUIA! No teens with 'tudes, unresponsive mates, or quarrelsome co-workers have any real power over you! ALLELUIA!

Because he lives he holds the future and life is worth the living just because he lives. ALLELUIA! Stop worrying about tomorrow. Entrust it to the powerful love of your Risen Savior. ALLELUIA! Yesterday's gone! Tomorrow's not promised to any of us! Enjoy today! Give thanks for today's blessings! Give your best today! Love with all your heart today! Today! Today! Life is worth the living just because he lives! ALLELUIA! ALLELUIA! ALLELUIA!