

## REFLECTIONS FOR EASTER SUNDAY ~ 17 April 2022

### The Mount ~ The Residence at Littledale

“Resurrection has left footprints in the dew.” These words from the Scottish Minister, Roddy Hamilton, celebrate the good news of Easter morning, “He is risen.” The Gospel reading from today’s Liturgy of the Word speaks about the first encounter Jesus has in his new life – the meeting with Mary Magdalene in the garden.



The reading begins with the words, “Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark” (Jn 20:1) as Mary Magdalene comes to the tomb in the garden as soon as is acceptable after the Sabbath, the tomb near which she and her friends had waited after Jesus’ burial. Immediately, these words bring us back to the first creation story of Genesis which ended with God’s resting on the Sabbath (“the first day of the week”). She sees that the tomb is empty and runs to let the disciples know. Peter and the beloved disciple do not believe her, but they run back to the tomb and find that it is indeed empty. Mary remains behind after they go back home.

The presence of the garden and the angels in white brings us to the second creation story with the Garden of Eden, the rupture between God and Adam and Eve, and the presence of the cherubim to guard the Garden from which Adam and Eve were driven. The harmony of the first creation story and the intimacy between God and humanity in the second story have been lost. We now come to another garden, in the morning not the evening, to see two angels in white guarding the garden tomb. Jesus is present there and speaks his first words after the Resurrection, “Woman why are you weeping?” After Mary responds thinking Jesus to be the gardener, he simply calls her name, “Mary!” That alone convinces her that Jesus has risen. Jesus then sends her back once again to the disciples. We are told, “Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, ‘I have seen the Lord’; and she told them that he had said these things to her” (Jn 20:18).

A new creation has dawned! The evening of the loss of right relationship between God and humanity has been restored in the morning of resurrection, reconciliation of that right relationship, announced to and believed by a woman. That woman, Mary Magdalene, becomes the first one to announce the good news of that new creation, of that restored relationship, of reconciliation.

Why Mary? Because she was there – she was there during the years of Jesus’ public ministry, she was there at the foot of the cross, she was there when he died and was buried in the tomb, and she was there immediately after he rose from the dead. She was truly a beloved and faithful disciple who wept for Jesus in his death and was the first to rejoice with him in his resurrection. [Jan Richardson](#) expresses so poignantly what Mary must have felt that morning



***The Three Marys at the Tomb***

**Henry Ossawa Tanner**

You hardly imagined standing here,  
 everything you ever loved suddenly returned to you,  
 looking you in the eye and calling your name.  
 And now you do not know  
 how to abide this hole in the center of your chest,  
 where a door slams shut  
 and swings open at the same time,  
 turning on the hinge of your aching and hopeful heart.  
 I tell you, this is not a banishment from the garden.  
 This is an invitation, a choice, a threshold, a gate.  
 This is your life calling to you  
 from a place you could never have dreamed,  
 but now that you have glimpsed its edge,  
 you cannot imagine choosing any other way.  
 So let the tears come as anointing, as consecration,  
 and then let them go.  
 Let this blessing gather itself around you.  
 Let it give you what you will need for this journey.  
 You will not remember the words—they do not matter.  
 All you need to remember is how it sounded  
 when you stood in the place of death  
 and heard the living call your name.

Easter is for all of us who are Christians a time to ritualize this pivotal moment in the life of creation, this moment of the dawning of a new creation. The two other faith traditions which share the same



roots as Christianity are also celebrating a new creation at this same time. This year, Judaism began Passover on April 15 (the time marking God's delivery of the people of Israel from slavery in Egypt and the beginning of their journey to the Promised Land), and Islam celebrates Ramadan from April 2 to May 1 (the anniversary of the month during which Muhammad received the initial revelations that would become the Quran). All three religious traditions are celebrating a moment of new life for their communities, very much linked with nature – for Christianity and Judaism, their feasts are

linked to the first full moon after the equinox; for Islam, their feast begins with the rise of the crescent moon.

But this Easter is more than simply ritualizing the memory of the beginning of this new time. It is a time for us to renew our commitment to live this new beginning, this new creation, in the midst of our life circumstances. [Roddy Hamilton](#) says it so well:

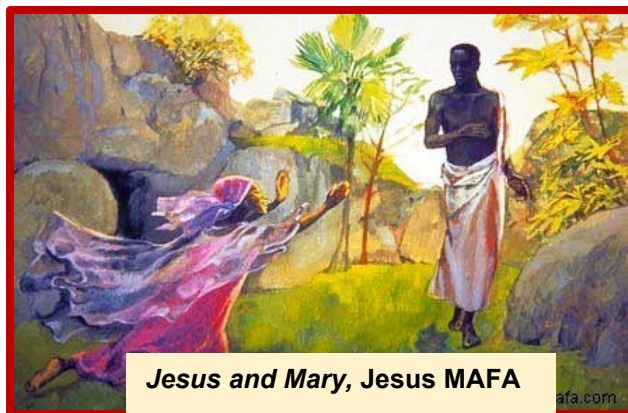
When it takes hold, resurrection doesn't let go,  
 it shakes the dead awake,  
 it shakes the darkness from the light,  
 it shakes the silence from our throats  
 and it wrestles death from all that is dying  
 Let us go out into the world  
 and in the upheaval of resurrection  
 seek out the life



How does the upheaval of resurrection make a difference in my life today? For each one of us, the answer to that question brings a unique response. Perhaps for one it means accepting the pain and suffering of my life right now in the knowledge that it has meaning in the context of Jesus' death and resurrection. For another, it may be simply calling another person by her name because she needs to know that she matters. For another, it may be journeying with persons who are poor and without a voice, helping them find their voice. For another, it may be leading in celebrations of life and of hope. For another, it may be caring for Earth, our common home, in multiple ways.

For a community, it may be praying together or reflecting together or planning ways to care for Earth or reaching out to persons who are in need. For our congregation, it may be daring new ways of supporting and strengthening our sponsored ministries or challenging the status quo of corporations by divesting of fossil fuels or supporting, with our resources, ministries being carried out by others who share our values. For all of us, it is creating pathways to inclusion, responding with radical hospitality, and welcoming the stranger in our midst. For all of us, it is about "mercying: imaging the face of God in all Creation."

Mary Magdalene was there – always present, never really knowing how much her presence meant, never even imaging what her presence would mean in God's unfolding plan. The upheaval of resurrection in my life means that, no matter what the circumstances or the challenges of my life, I am present. I am present with all my failings and my gifts, my vulnerabilities and my strengths, my hopes and my dreams. I am present.



**Jesus and Mary, Jesus MAFA**

Because I am present, Jesus the Christ will call my name and will lead me in ways that are life-giving and hope-filled. I am a child of the resurrection in an imperfect world marred by unjust war in the Ukraine, a pandemic that will not stop, atrocities in Syria and Afghanistan, church communities struggling through unprecedented challenges, Indigenous

communities struggling to find justice, a global climate emergency, and people poor and marginalized by society. How does my presence help make this world with all its failings a little more peaceful, a little more just, and a little more loved? That is the call of this Easter day.

May Easter be a verb in my life, an action word that brings openness and newness and hope. In one of his poems, Gerard Manley Hopkins says of Jesus the Christ, "Let him easter in us, be a dayspring to the dimness of us, be a crimson-cresseted east." May this be the prayer of our Easter day and Easter days to come. Let Jesus the Christ Easter in us!

We conclude our reflections with a poem-prayer from [Thom Shuman](#):

On this Easter, as on that first day long ago,  
you come, Steadfast Love,  
continuing to walk with us on this strange pilgrimage of worry, fear, and loss,  
showing us the good news of the empty tomb, calling  
us to run and tell everyone of the new life which is ours.

On this Easter morning, as on that early first morning, you wait and watch,  
Gardener of the seeds of love, hope, and grace you



planted deep within us,  
as we stand amazed at the harvest of hope and life  
which is handed to us this day as you call us by our names.

In those early morning moments, Spirit of the broken-hearted friends,  
you whispered of that love which cannot be held behind  
the stones of our fears and doubts,  
of that hope which puts grave clothes into bandages for the hurting,  
of that grace which turns cartwheels in the gardens of our hearts,  
even as you whisper them to us.

On this Easter, as on every day,  
your grace, your peace, your love give us new life and hope,  
God in Community, Holy in One.



## REFLECTIONS FOR THE SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER ~ 24 April 2022

### The Mount ~ The Residence at Littledale

"This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it" (Ps 118:24). This verse from Psalm 118, in today's Liturgy of the Word, gives us a thread to bind our readings together. During the readings, we are present at Easter day, eight days later, we are present in the early days just after the Ascension and Pentecost when the disciples begin to live the Resurrection, and we are present many days and years after the Church has gone beyond Judah to the Gentile lands as far as Greece.



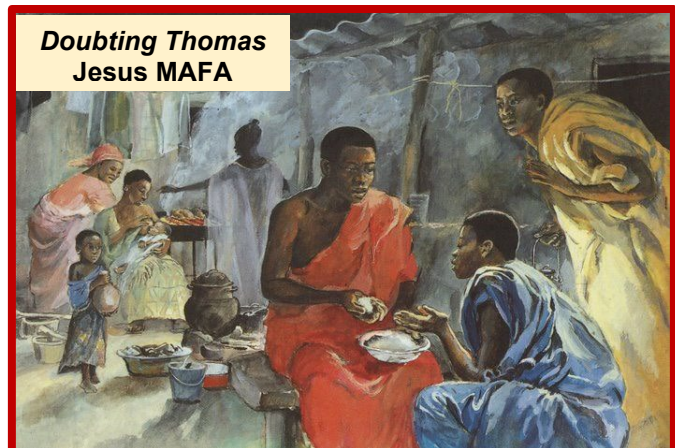
***Jesus appears in the Upper Room***  
**Artist Unknown**

The Gospel passage from John begins on the evening of the day of the Resurrection, the first day of the week. In the opening verses, we are given three reminders of the first day of creation. We are told explicitly that it is the first day of the week, the echo of the first day of creation in Genesis 1. The disciples are in the house locked in fear of the Jews, an echo of the "formless void and darkness which covered the face of the deep" (Gen 1:3). Just as God spoke on the first day of the week and darkness came to an end with the word "Let there be light" (Gen 1:3) so too Jesus speaks a word, "Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you.'" (Jn 20:21). After he said this, he shows them his hands and his side.

He then begins to teach them what Resurrection means. Jesus speaks about forgiveness and reconciliation, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained" (Jn 20:22-23). Too often, we have confined this teaching to the

Sacrament of Reconciliation and the priest's ministry of forgiveness of sins. It means far more, indeed what we pray in every "Our Father," "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us." Resurrection is about reconciliation, reconciliation of the rupture that came with the tragic end of the creation story – the rupture between humans and Earth, and the rupture among humans. How do we live reconciliation every day – in our relationships with the persons with whom we live, in our sponsored or individual ministries, in our advocacy work, in our prayer in solidarity with those who are suffering or with our wounded Earth?

The second part of the Gospel happens eight days later, again the first day of the week. Thank heavens for Thomas who demands to see Jesus before he believes! Now we are given another chance to remember the simple words which we passed over in the first part of the reading, "Jesus showed them his hands and his side" (Jn 20:20). Now we recall a second learning from the resurrection. In his resurrection appearances, Jesus is known by showing the wounds in his hands, feet, and side. In his resurrected life, Jesus' suffering does not





end. He continues to suffer with us, with all creatures, with our wounded Earth – what we now describe as an element of “deep incarnation.”



***Jesus takes Thomas' hand, Artist Unknown***

Jesus is known after his resurrection by the wounds in his side, his hands, and his feet. Richard Rohr ofm says, “The true meaning of the raising of Jesus is that God will turn all our human crucifixions into resurrection.” We have a profoundly simple image in this Easter story, “Then he said to Thomas, ‘Put your finger here and see my hands’” (Jn 20:27). Jesus takes Thomas’ hand in his and invites him to put his hands in the wounds of Jesus’ body. Jesus shares our pain and suffering, holds us in our pain and suffering. Let Jesus take your hand and invite you to put your hand in his wounds. Now invite Jesus to take your hand so that you can put his hand in your wounds.

Our third set of days happen after Ascension and Pentecost when Jesus is no longer physically visible on Earth. Now the Spirit has come among the believers, and the church is born. As our short reading this morning from Acts shows, one mark of that first church is its presence in community, not in one or two persons, but in a whole community visibly meeting together, “they were all together in Solomon’s Portico” (Acts 5:12). The second mark was their ministry of reconciliation, of repairing the rupture, of healing the sick and those with tormented with unclean spirits (Acts 5:16).

The final day is set many years after Pentecost when the church has grown beyond Judah and Jewish members to the Gentiles as far as Greece. Writing from the island of Patmos (in Greece although close to Asia Minor or today’s Turkey), John speaks about the persecution and ongoing suffering of the Christians in that community. once again it is happening on the first day of the week, now called “the Lord’s Day” (Rev 1:10). The one like the Son of Man speaks to him, “But he placed his right hand on me, saying, ‘Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, and the living one’” (Rev 1:17-18). Note the echo of the encounter between Thomas and Jesus, “he placed his right hand on me,” and the word, “Do not be afraid”, echoing the encounters between Jesus and the disciples.

Finally, we have the image of the Risen Jesus as the first and the last, repeating the previous two references to Jesus as “the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end” (Rev 1:8, 11). This is also an image of the Cosmic Christ who has been there from the beginning before the first incarnation, the creation of the universe. And now comes the promise that Jesus the Christ will be there until the end of the universe and the end of time. This is the third learning of the Resurrection, that Jesus now raised from the dead is alive forever. In Jesus, we too have life forever, “Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name” (Jn 20:31).



And, so, we end our reflections this morning with a prayer-poem from [Thom Shuman](#), thanking God the creator, Jesus Christ the faithful witness, and the Spirit, breath of peace.

Holy God, Lover of your children:  
the tomb has been opened, and we dance into your future.  
Your life has dawned on us, and we surround you with our praise.  
You reach out your hand, and lead us into joy.

Jesus Christ, Faithful Witness:  
you pick open the locked doors of our hearts  
and come in to be with us forever.  
You breathe peace into our souls, so we may bring healing to a troubled world.

Holy Spirit, Breath of Peace:  
you show us our hearts, so we may give love to others.  
You show us our hands, sending us to serve the needy.  
You show us your hope, so we may live in your joy.

God in Community, Holy in One, who is, who was, and who is to come.

**Island of Patmos**



## REFLECTIONS FOR THE THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER ~ 01 MAY 2022

### The Mount ~ The Residence at Littledale

This morning I begin our reflection on God's Word with excerpts from a poem, [\*The Miracle of Morning\*](#), by Amanda Gorman, the twenty-four-year-old American poet and activist, the first National Youth Poet Laureate in the United States:



Amanda Gorman

*Image: Shawn Miller*

I thought I'd awaken to a world in mourning.  
Heavy clouds crowding, a society storming.  
But there's something different on this golden morning.  
Something magical in the sunlight, wide and warming.

I see a dad with a stroller taking a jog.  
Across the street, a bright-eyed girl chases her dog.  
A grandma on a porch fingers her rosaries.  
She grins as her young neighbor brings her groceries.

So on this meaningful morn, we mourn and we mend.  
Like light, we can't be broken, even when we bend.

We ignite not in the light, but in lack thereof,  
For it is in loss that we truly learn to love.  
In this chaos, we will discover clarity.  
In suffering, we must find solidarity.

We'll observe how the burdens braved by humankind  
Are also the moments that make us humans kind;  
Let every dawn find us courageous, brought closer;

Heeding the light before the fight is over.  
When this ends, we'll smile sweetly, finally seeing  
In testing times, we became the best of beings.

This poem echoes the verse from our Psalm 30 today, "Weeping may linger for the night, but joy comes with the morning" (Ps 30:5). It also resonates with the heart of the resurrection story from John's Gospel in today's Liturgy of the Word. Twice Jesus has appeared to the disciples after his Resurrection, but they still do not understand; they still do not seem to truly see who Jesus the Christ now is and what his rising from the dead means to them and to their lives. So, they do the most ordinary of things – they go back fishing. They fish all night but catch nothing – at daybreak a stranger tells them to throw the net over the other side of the boat. They do so and catch 153 fish – and despite the great catch, their net is not torn.



Why does the writer of the story give us such specific detail – 153 fish and the net is not torn? Think of a memory you have from a precious experience many years ago, a memory that holds



tightly to every detail. The memory of this morning must have been embedded in the hearts and minds of the disciples, never to be forgotten. As the young poet says, “But there’s something different on this golden morning./Something magical in the sunlight, wide and warming.” These two details also hold rich symbolism. The abundance of the fish is overwhelming as is the abundant love of a God who loves so much that the universe was created, who loves so much that the only Son became one of us and suffered and died that we might have life. The net not broken is a sign of their newfound unity – again echoing the words of the poem, “Let every dawn find us courageous, brought closer.” From now on the disciples will grow into a sense of a community and gradually grow into the sense of a communion of all creation.

Their last memories of Jesus before his death were at a meal where he washed their feet. Now they have this new memory of Jesus preparing bread and fish for their breakfast – the Last Supper and the First Breakfast! And the words echo, “Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them and did the same with the fish” (Jn 21:13).



There is a second echo as the story continues. On the evening of Jesus’ arrest, Simon Peter follows him as far as the courtyard where he is asked three times, “You are not also one of this man’s disciples, are you?” (Jn 18:17, 25, 26). He answers each time, “I am not” (Jn 18:17, 25, 27), denying his relationship with his friend and his leader. Now, on this morning, Jesus asks Simon Peter another question three times, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” (Jn

21:15-17). Each time Simon Peter answers, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you – Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you” (Jn 21). Jesus responds, “Feed my lambs. . .Tend my sheep. . .Feed my sheep” (Jn 21).

It has been said that the most precious words anyone wants to hear are “I love you” and “I forgive you.” Simon Peter hears both messages from Jesus on this morning and is transformed by an abundant love which forgives. The passage ends with Jesus’ words, “Follow me.” When we meet Peter in the Acts of the Apostles, this transformed man who now faithfully follows Jesus the Christ is courageous and daring in his leadership of the fledging community, saying to the rulers who have ordered them to stop teaching about Jesus, “We are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey” (Acts 5:32). The writer of Acts goes on to say, “As they left the council, they rejoiced that they were considered worthy to suffer dishonour for the sake of the name” (Acts 5:41). Peter proves the truth of the last verse from Amanda Gorman’s poem, “In testing times, we became the best of beings.” What are the testing times for me, for you, for us today that will help us become our best selves, the best of beings?



**Breakfast on the Beach**  
Cerezo Barredo

The reading from the book of Revelation reminds us that the joy of the Resurrection is not only reflected in the lives of humankind but in all beings. The narrator in today’s reading tells us about voices raised in praise of the Risen One, “Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels surrounding the throne and the living creatures and the elders; they numbered myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands” (Rev 5:11). Just in case we missed



it the first time, the narrator repeats the message in slightly different words, "Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, singing, 'To the one seated on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honour and glory and might for ever and ever!'" (Rev 5:13). All created beings praise the Risen One.

Just as it was for Simon Peter and the disciples, it is the ordinary things like fishing or sharing breakfast on the beach or eating bread and fish that teach us what the Resurrection of Jesus means for your life and my life. Let us be open to the ordinary in our lives. Let us see with the eyes of our hearts how we are invited, trusted to be Jesus the Christ in our world. The poet [Steve Garnaas-Holmes](#) says it this way:

The bread we share is not just the Last Supper;  
it's also the First Breakfast.  
Also the Great Lunch (for 5000).

The bread we break is the Risen One,  
morning, noon and night,  
awakening us, strengthening us,  
giving himself to us.

On the beach he might have said,  
"This is my body, risen in you."  
At Emmaus he could have said,  
"This is my body, transformed in you."  
Among the 5000,  
"This is my body, multiplied among you."

Christ breaks the fast of God's presence.  
Everything you eat is breakfast.  
Everything you drink is Christ.  
It's a new day.





## REFLECTIONS FOR THE SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER ~ 24 April 2022

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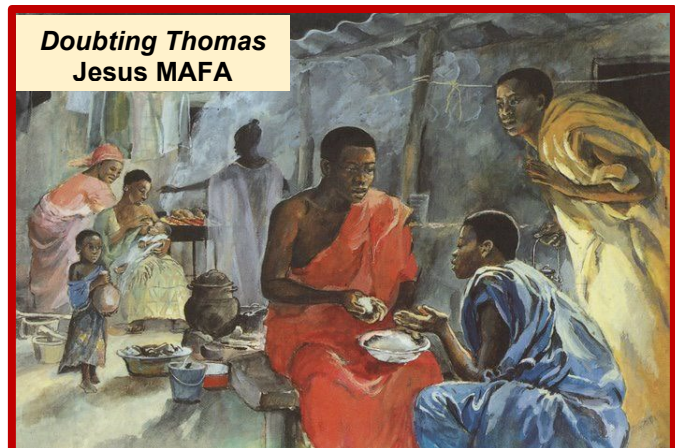
***Jesus appears in the Upper Room***  
**Artist Unknown**

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He then begins to teach them what Resurrection means. Jesus speaks about forgiveness and reconciliation, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained" (Jn 20:22-23). Too often, we have confined this teaching to the

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The second part of the Gospel happens eight days later, again the first day of the week. Thank heavens for Thomas who demands to see Jesus before he believes! Now we are given another chance to remember the simple words which we passed over in the first part of the reading, "Jesus showed them his hands and his side" (Jn 20:20). Now we recall a second learning from the resurrection. In his resurrection appearances, Jesus is known by showing the wounds in his hands, feet, and side. In his resurrected life, Jesus' suffering does not





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Our third set of days happen after Ascension and Pentecost when Jesus is no longer physically visible on Earth. Now the Spirit has come among the believers, and the church is born. As our short reading this morning from Acts shows, one mark of that first church is its presence in community, not in one or two persons, but in a whole community visibly meeting together, “they were all together in Solomon’s Portico” (Acts 5:12). The second mark was their ministry of reconciliation, of repairing the rupture, of healing the sick and those with tormented with unclean spirits (Acts 5:16).

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And, so, we end our reflections this morning with a prayer-poem from [Thom Shuman](#), thanking God the creator, Jesus Christ the faithful witness, and the Spirit, breath of peace.

Holy God, Lover of your children:  
the tomb has been opened, and we dance into your future.  
Your life has dawned on us, and we surround you with our praise.  
You reach out your hand, and lead us into joy.

Jesus Christ, Faithful Witness:  
you pick open the locked doors of our hearts  
and come in to be with us forever.  
You breathe peace into our souls, so we may bring healing to a troubled world.

Holy Spirit, Breath of Peace:  
you show us our hearts, so we may give love to others.  
You show us our hands, sending us to serve the needy.  
You show us your hope, so we may live in your joy.

God in Community, Holy in One, who is, who was, and who is to come.

**Island of Patmos**



## REFLECTIONS FOR THE FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER ~ 15 May 2022

### The Mount ~ The Residence at Littledale

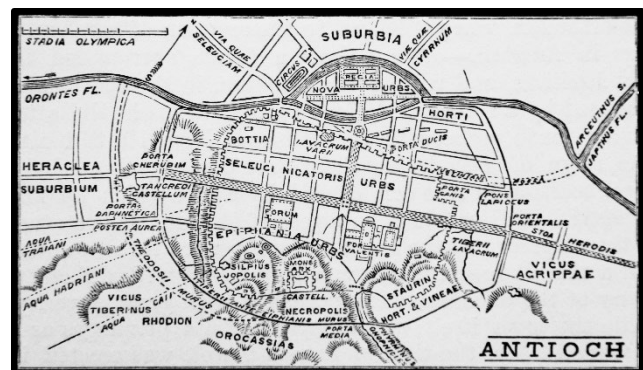
As is not unexpected in these Easter days, the theme which is threaded throughout today's Liturgy of the Word is "newness." Three readings speak about new ways, new journeys, and new realities. They are grounded in Psalm 145 which carries two unchanging truths: "The Lord is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love" (Ps 145:8-9), and "The Lord's dominion endures throughout all generations" (Ps 145:13). We are familiar with the Hebrew words for "mercy" included in three simple verses – gracious (*hanan*), merciful (*rahamim*), steadfast love (*hesed*), and compassion (*rahamim*).



Today's readings are well-known to us and, therefore, are easy to take for granted. But each reading contains a delightful, almost hidden, surprise which adds new meaning. In the Psalm, we read, "All your works shall give thanks to you, O Lord" (Ps 145:10). We are reminded once again that the creation of the universe was God's first incarnation, that we all belong to the sacred community of all creation, that each of God's creatures – people, animals, plants, flowers, insects,

rocks, stars – every single one of us gives thanks by being the one our God has created us to be. When are you your best self, the one God created you to be?

The first reading taken from the Acts of the Apostles finds Paul and Barnabas on the next stage of their journey as they return to Antioch of Syria where their journey had begun. Their journey has led them to open the door of faith for the Gentiles. The hidden surprise in this reading is found in their words to the church gathered to welcome them home as they "related all that God had done with them" (Acts 14:27), not what they had done from their own strengths nor what God had done **for** them. What has God done **with you** on your life's journey? What are some of the unexpected places to which God's invitation has taken you? Who are some of the unexpected people you have met on your journey? Even in this past week, what new thought or image or insight have you experienced that has brought you new hope? What has God done **with you**?



The reading from Revelation speaks to the new heaven and the new earth that have come with the resurrection of Jesus the Christ. There is a profound reminder of God's steadfast presence among us, "See, the home of God is among mortals. God will dwell with them; they will be God's peoples, and God will be with them" (Rev 21:3). This echoes the Hebrew name for God from rabbinic literature, *Shekinah* – the one who dwells with us – and the Hebrew name for Jesus as *Emmanuel*, God-with-us. Notice how, in one simple verse, the thought is repeated four times – home of God among mortals, God will dwell with them, they will be God's peoples, and God will



be with them. The repetitions emphasize how important and delightful this is – knowing that God chooses not only to create us and sustain us but actually chooses to dwell among us!

**A new heaven  
and a new earth**



The surprise in the reading from Revelation comes with the last sentence, “See, I am making all things new” (Rev 21:5). Notice that God does not say, “See, I am making all new things” even though that is what we probably hear. All things – heaven and earth and you and me – God is making all of us new. The Greek word is quite emphatic, “brand new”! Do you trust that God is making us brand new, every single day?

Some of that newness is evident as we watch grass grow or flowers bloom or babies grow. Some of the newness is evident when we see new ministries emerge – most of us remember when we opened St. Patrick’s Mercy Home or the Mercy Centre for Ecology and Justice or The Gathering Place. Some of the newness is evident when we realize that we are growing in our contemplative reflections – on the sacred communion of all creation or deep incarnation or integral ecology. Some of the newness comes when we form new communities – our community here at The Mount or the opening of our house in Huarmey.

Less evident to us as we grow older are the ways in which God continues to make us new, to renew us personally. We often use the word “diminishment” to speak about our own lives or the life of our congregation. How disrespectful that is to our creating God who breathes life and energy into our lives every day! Think of the ways since Easter Sunday that God has used you to bring hope or light to someone else or to Earth. Think of the ways since Easter Sunday that you have seen your own goodness reflected in the gratitude or thanks that someone expressed to you for something you had done. Think of the ways since Easter Sunday that you have seen someone doing good for another or others. Think of the ways since Easter Sunday that Earth gave you great joy – softly falling rain or a bright sunrise or a lunar eclipse or that first crocus or the sound of the birds. Think of the ways in which God is making all things new despite the pain and suffering and injustice that continues to happen around us.



And suddenly you just know. . .  
It is time to start something new  
and trust the magic of beginnings.  
~ Meister Eckhart

Today’s reading from the Last Supper, as recounted in John’s Gospel, speaks starkly to the one way in which we should be known – by our love – not by our good deeds or our great leadership

or our hard work or our brilliant thinking, but by our love. Jesus says it simply and directly, “I give you a new commandment, that you love one another” (Jn 13:24). This is not a suggestion or a recommendation; this is a commandment.

Our love for each other is how the world will know who we are and whose we are. Our love for each other is how the world will see, taste, touch, hear, and find Jesus. It is through our love that we will embody Jesus, make Jesus relatable, possible, plausible. Teresa of Avila is said to have written these words, “Christ has no body now but yours, no hands, no feet on earth but yours, yours are the eyes with which he looks compassion on this world. Christ has no body now on earth but yours.”

But why does Jesus say that this is a “new” commandment? The book of Deuteronomy had told us to love the Lord our God with all our heart and soul and might (Deut 6:5), and Leviticus had told us to love our neighbour as ourselves (Lev 19:17-18). I think that there is another hidden surprise in this Gospel reading. Just before Jesus gives us this commandment, we are told, “Judas had gone out” (Jn 13:31). In the other three Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke), after Judas betrays Jesus, the community of apostles are no longer called the Twelve but the Eleven. However, after Jesus’ Resurrection in John’s Gospel, the group are still called the Twelve (Jn 20:24). Is it possible that we are being reminded in John’s Gospel that Judas remains one of the chosen apostles, remains loved, even after he has betrayed Jesus? Is there newness in the commandment to love one another when we are reminded that we love those who love us, but we also love those who hate us, who disappoint us, who betray us?

Jesus tells us how to love as he loves when he gives us the parable in Matthew 25: “I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me” (Matt 25:35-36). What is the newness you see in Jesus’ commandment to love one another? What is the new way in which you have lived this commandment in this last year? How have you loved in a new way?

Let us end our reflection this morning with God’s hidden surprises in our heart as we hear this lovely reflection by Steve Garnaas-Holmes:

The Beloved danced around the light,  
twirled her galaxy skirts  
dreamed of love and made room in herself for another  
poured her delight into the palm of her hand,  
fashioned it with beauty and set it dancing with joy  
yes, you, shining in the dark of her eyes  
river into the world flowing with all the others  
all one dance, one beauty, one delight  
Tell me, child,  
what will you do with all that love in you?

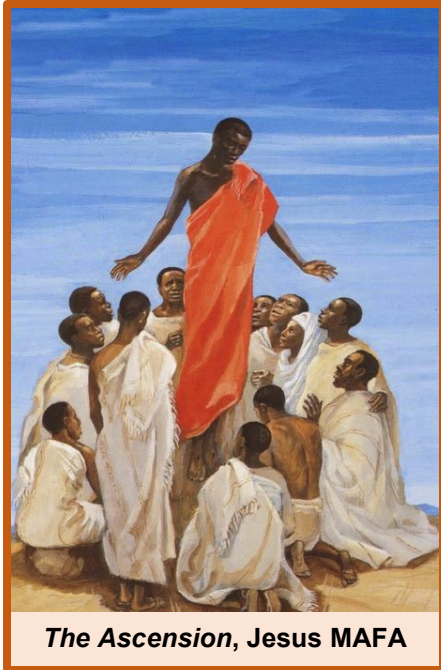
**Tell me, child, what will you do with all that love in you?**



## REFLECTIONS FOR ASCENSION SUNDAY ~ 30 May 2022

### The Mount ~ The Residence at Littledale

“With the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you” (Eph 1:18). With these words, the writer of the letter to the Ephesians gives us the courage to look at the Ascension with new eyes, the eyes of our hearts. The Ascension is, without doubt, the one moment in Jesus’ life which we understand least.



***The Ascension, Jesus MAFA***

Even within the Gospels and Acts, the time and place of the Ascension varies. In today’s reading from the Gospel of Luke, it seems to happen on Easter Sunday. In the Acts of the Apostles, written by the same writer as the Gospel of Luke, it happens forty days after Easter Sunday. In the Gospels of Matthew and Mark, it seems to happen on Easter Sunday. In John’s Gospel, Jesus says to Mary Magdalene, “Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God’” (Jn 20:17), again suggesting that it happens on Easter Sunday. Matthew and Mark suggest that it happens in Galilee, Luke says that it is in Bethany, and the Acts, a mount near Jerusalem (possibly the Mount of Olives).

What is clear is that the Ascension is a metaphor for the last time that Jesus is physically present among the disciples. Jesus remains among them long enough for them to know that he is risen, that he is returning to the Father, that when he leaves the Spirit will come to be present among them,

and that they now are to become witnesses “in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the Earth” (Acts 1:8).

The sense of “being taken up to heaven” flows from the understanding of the cosmos in the time of Jesus. It was a three-part cosmos with the heavens above, an Earth centered on Jerusalem in the middle, and the underworld below. Heaven was separated from the Earth by the visible sky, a solid inverted bowl where God’s palace sat on pillars. Today our cosmology is quite different. We know that heaven is not up there nor is hell down below even though we tend to use that same language. Even our use of the word “Ascension” reflects that ancient cosmology.

The Ascension holds a sense of presence and absence. Ron Rolheiser omi reflects, “The Ascension names and highlights a paradox that lies deep at the center of life, namely, that we all reach a point in life where we can only give our presence more deeply by going away so that others can receive the full blessing of our spirits.” John Foley sj adds, “But instead of there being nothing left for us, there was now humanity transformed: a divine human person who had opened himself all the way and who was now marked with the totality of love. He was on his way back to the dynamic, swirling, Trinitarian circle of love from which his humanity had issued in the first place.”

Veronica Lawson rsm takes this transformation further when she reflects that the physical loss of Jesus means a different sort of presence, one which we have a role in making happen,



“Today’s Feast of the Ascension invites us to face the experience of loss in a transformative way. The liturgy draws us into another aspect of the Mystery, that of the presence and absence of Jesus who has been raised. They have to face the fact that the physical loss of Jesus means a new and different sort of presence and that they have a role to play in making him present in their world.”

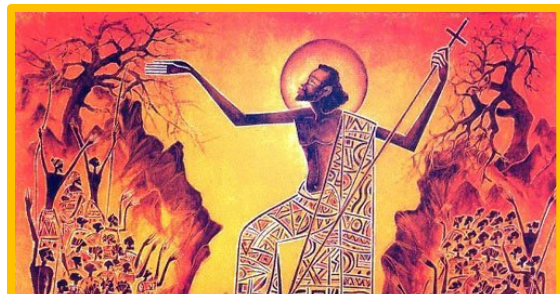


All the biblical accounts speak to our role as witnesses to the good news. In John’s Gospel, Jesus tells Mary to go to the disciples and let them know that he is risen. In Matthew’s account, Jesus says, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matt 28:19). In Mark, Jesus says, “Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation” (Mk 16:15). Both Luke and Acts have Jesus tell the disciples that they are to be witnesses to all nations, to the ends of the Earth. What we now know is that the telling the good news, the witnessing to the good news, is not just for humankind but is, as Mark says, for “the whole creation” and Acts “to the ends of the Earth. In our time, we understand this to mean the whole planetary communion and the communion of all creation.

Also new to our understanding today is the awareness that the risen Jesus who ascends still carries the wounds of his suffering and death. We saw that in the resurrection stories where Jesus proves to the disciples that he has risen by showing them the wounds in his hands and side. The Baptist minister, Aaron Coyle-Carr, brings further wisdom to our understanding of the Ascension:

In the Ascension, disability is taken into the divine life and restored to its proper place as one of the myriad reflections of the imago Dei, the very image of God. The disabled Jesus is dependent upon others. He is a survivor of trauma, and he bears its marks in his body. We have a disabled God. The Ascension is good news for human bodies because it means that a human body is already glorified and in heaven, and that Jesus Christ—who is that body—is profoundly aware of what it means to be human. Whichever portion of your embodied reality has been used to keep you from God, the Ascension of a specific, marginalized, disabled, Jewish body into heaven means that the experiences of en-fleshed humans matter.

All of the challenges posed by our response to the loss of Jesus’ physical presence are eased by the promise of the coming of the Holy Spirit, repeated often by Jesus after his resurrection: “You will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now” (Acts 1:5) and “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8).



**The Ascension, from Zaire, Artist Unknown**



How different is the response of the disciples to ‘esus’ ascension than to his suffering and death! When they betrayed him, they ran away, they were filled with fear, they were deeply saddened, they

felt hopeless and alone. Now they “returned to Jerusalem with great joy” (Lk 24:52). They have not lost Jesus as they believed when he died. Instead, they have a new relationship to him, the risen One, strengthened by the promise of the presence of the Spirit. Psalm 47 echoes that joy, “Clap your hands, all you peoples; shout to God with loud songs of joy” (Ps 47:1). This psalm also reminds us that God is not only leader of all nations but is leader of “all the Earth” (Ps 47:7).

We conclude these reflections on this little understood moment in the life of Jesus with a poem-prayer from [Nick Fawcett](#), speaking with the voice of the disciples:

You'd think we'd have been dismayed,  
wouldn't you –  
to lose Jesus again, so soon after he'd  
come back to us.  
After all, we'd been shattered the first time,  
left floundering like fish out of water  
once deprived of his presence.  
True, this time was different –  
no cross, no agony, torment and death –  
but he was gone nonetheless,  
snatched away from us once more.  
Only he wasn't, that's the strange thing.  
He was with us much more meaningfully,  
not in the flesh but in Spirit –  
around us, beside us, beyond us, within  
us,  
touching our lives in every part.  
I can't quite explain it,  
but suddenly we knew he was closer than  
we'd ever dreamt –  
for he was not just the Messiah, the risen  
Lord,  
but God, one with him, one with us, the  
divine in human form.  
We'd walked and talked with him,  
and we finally realised that we'd do so always,  
to the end of time.  
No wonder he blessed us when he took his leave,  
for though he's far away now at the Father's side,  
through his Spirit he couldn't be more near.





## REFLECTIONS FOR PENTECOST SUNDAY ~ 05 June 2022

### The Mount ~ The Residence at Littledale



Today the Jewish community celebrates Shavuot, the fiftieth day since Passover. Shavuot brings together Earth and heaven with its commemoration of both the wheat harvest in Israel and the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai. This was the feast day which the disciples of Jesus were celebrating when they experienced the presence of the Spirit among them and within them in a special way. Ever since that day, the Christian community commemorates Pentecost, the fiftieth day since Easter Sunday, as the birthday of the Church.

Our readings today remind us of two startling realities. While the reading from the Acts of the Apostles tells of the coming of the Spirit fifty days after Jesus' resurrection, the reading from John's Gospel says that the Spirit descended on the apostles on the evening of Easter Sunday when Jesus joins them in the Upper Room. In Jesus' words at the Last Supper again from John's Gospel, he says, "the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you" (Jn 14:26). At the Last Supper and in that same Upper Room on Easter Sunday evening, Jesus intertwines the coming of the Spirit with "peace," with living God's word, and with sending forth.

In the account from the Acts of the Apostles, there are many more disciples than the apostles present, including Mary, the mother of Jesus. In this narrative of the coming of the Spirit, the emphasis is on the Spirit coming to each one individually as well as to the community. The first gift is that of the ability to understand and speak in other languages, the many languages of the people who have gathered from around their known world for the feast of Shavuot. The impetus to share the good news is also evident in the rest of the narrative (which is not read today) and begins immediately with the three thousand who chose to become followers of the Way on that first day.

There is a comforting sense that the coming of the Spirit is not confined to one day or to one space. As one spiritual writer says, "Pentecost moments have been happening down through history since that day the Church was born. When the Spirit breaks into the lives of individuals and communities to bind people together in the name of Jesus Christ for the purposes of the Kin-dom of God, Pentecost possibilities become the dreams and visions of disciples. Pentecost possibilities still happen today." Hildegard of Bingen has the beautiful prayer to the Spirit:

Holy Spirit, the life that gives life:  
You are the cause of all movement.  
You are the breath of all creatures.  
You are the salve that purifies our souls.





You are the ointment that heals our wounds.  
You are the fire that warms our hearts.  
You are the light that guides our feet.  
Let all the world praise you.

Psalm 104 gives us the second delightful reminder – God’s Spirit has been there since the creation of the cosmos, “When you send forth your spirit, they are created, and you renew the face of the Earth” (Ps 104:30). The Hebrew word for spirit, breath, and wind is the same, *ruah*.



The wonder of that interconnection is the sense that the Earth’s wind, the person’s breath, and God’s Spirit are one, all part of a sacred communion which is manifested in creation and is made richer in the incarnation of God in the person of Jesus. In the first verses of Genesis, with the creation of the cosmos, “God’s first act of mercy,” we read, “In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while the spirit (*ruah*) of God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, ‘Let there be light’; and there was light” (Gen 1:1-3).

Psalm 104 adds depth to the presence of the Spirit at creation by proclaiming that creation is ongoing, for people and for Earth. Every newborn person, ever newly growing plant, every newly imagined work of art, every new idea is the face of Earth renewed. Every day we see newness all around us even if we are in the midst of suffering or anxiety. How have you seen creation renewed, the Spirit active, in this past week?

Whether we read the story of Pentecost in Acts, the breathing of the Spirit into us in John’s Gospel, or the Spirit renewing the face of Earth in Psalm 104, two intersecting themes permeate – that of inclusion and that of sending forth.

The Spirit in Acts enables the disciples to understand and speak the languages of all peoples of Earth, a metaphor for openness to all goodness around us, no matter how unusual or unexpected. Jesus breathes the Spirit into the disciples after sending them to be peacemakers and bringers of reconciliation. The psalm reminds us that Earth is full of God’s creatures and that God rejoices in God’s works. And the second reading from the letter to the Corinthians continues that theme of inclusion by reminding us that our gifts and talents and uniqueness all come from the Spirit who animates them within us. Paul tells us, “In the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit” (1 Cor 12:13). Peter, in his homily to the people after the disciples have been filled with the Spirit, quotes the prophet Joel and repeats the same teaching, “In the last days it will be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young ones shall see visions, and your old ones shall dream dreams.



Even upon my slaves, both men and women, in those days I will pour out my Spirit; and they shall prophesy" (Acts 2:17-18).

The sending forth to share the good news echoes through all the readings. The Benedictine monk, Ivan Nicoletto osb Cam, says, "Pentecost reminds us that Christ's spirit is not mild or temperate but a disrupting force, a caring love that disconcerts and unsettles the systems of this world, redefining power from the inside out and from the bottom up. We usually think and act in terms of continuities, predictability, repetition of schemes and plans, and the Pentecostal event show us God's capacity to interrupt, to break those schemes open, and to violate those formulae: it is a bold and risky spirit, even disobedient, when it is a matter of uncovering new paths of life." The mystic, Mechtild of Magdeburg, says the same thing more poetically:

Effortlessly,  
Love flows from God into humans,  
Like a bird  
Who rivers the air  
Without moving her wings.  
Thus we move in God's world,  
One in body and soul,  
Though outwardly separate in form.  
As the Source strikes the note,  
Humanity sings--  
The Holy Spirit is our harpist,  
And all strings  
Which are touched in Love  
Must sound.

Bruce Epperly reminds us, "There is a mystic within each of us. God addresses all of us in sighs too deep for words. God's Spirit is always beckoning us toward more than we can ask or imagine. The omnipresence of God insures a Godward movement in all of our lives, even when we are unaware of it. Pentecost is a day for mystics and spiritual adventurers."

On this day for mystics and spiritual adventurers, we end our reflections with a blessing written by Jan Richardson:

This is the blessing we cannot speak by ourselves.  
This is the blessing we cannot summon by our own devices,  
cannot shape to our purpose, cannot bend to our will.  
This is the blessing that comes  
when we leave behind our aloneness  
when we gather together  
when we turn toward one another.  
This is the blessing that blazes among us  
when we speak the words strange to our ears  
when we finally listen into the chaos  
when we breathe together at last.

## Reflections for the Sixth Sunday of Easter ~ 22 May 2022

### The Mount ~ The Residence at Littledale

Today is the Sixth Sunday of Easter, the last Sunday before the feast of the Ascension and then Pentecost. Today also marks the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of St. Clare's Mercy Hospital – although 22 May 1922 was on Monday, it also followed the Sixth Sunday of Easter and came a few days before the Ascension.

The profound impact of images of newness (that persistent Easter essence) is visible in our first three readings this morning. In the first reading, we see a record of the first formal meeting of



church leaders, what we know as the Council of Jerusalem, which is also recorded in a slightly different way in Paul's letter to the Galatians 2:1-10. This gathering made the firm decision about a new beginning – the good news would be preached to Gentiles as well as Jews. There were four “rules” that Gentile Christians should live by: abstain from food polluted by idols, sexual immorality, the meat of strangled animals, and blood. These were not rules the Gentiles must follow in order to be saved. Rather, the

rules were to build harmony between Jewish and Gentile Christians in the first century, thus promoting peace within the early church.

This image of inclusion is embedded in a written letter from the apostles and the elders to the believers of Gentile origin (Acts 15:23) to be shared with the early Christian communities so that there would be no misunderstandings about this important decision. And the decision is framed beautifully, “For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to impose on you no further burden than these essentials” (Acts 15:28).

In Psalm 67, we hear that beautiful blessing, “May God be gracious to us and bless us and make God's face to shine upon us (Ps 67:1). Imagine what God's face shining on you, on me, on us really means. Think of light shining on the face of someone you love. Think of the light of the sun shining on Earth, on the trees, on the tops of the waves, on the growing grass. Think of the light of the full moon shining across the water. Now think of the light of God's face shining on you. Be still and ponder the joy and wonder of God's face shining on you. Rejoice and be glad that God loves you enough to do this every single day.

This verse from Psalm 67 echoes the blessing in Numbers (6:24-26) which is so familiar to us.

May God bless you and keep you;  
May God's face to shine upon you and be gracious to you;  
May God countenance be lifted upon you and give you peace.

Did you know that the oldest existing text of the Scriptures is this text from the book of Numbers? Two silver amulets were found rolled into tiny scrolls in a burial cave in Jerusalem (one amulet is nearly four inches long and the other – the one shown here – an





inch and a half long). They are about 500 years older than the Dead Sea Scrolls and date to about 700 years before the coming of Jesus. This is one of God's many surprises – the oldest surviving text is an intimate blessing from God to all God's creatures! In the words of the Psalm, this blessing is how God's "way may be known upon Earth" (Ps 67:2).



The image in Revelation is the most dramatic of all. The spirit brings John to a high mountain from which he looks down to see the new Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God. It is radiant like that rare jewel jasper and clear like crystal. Jasper is the traditional birthstone of the first month of Spring which protects and empowers, keeping people strong and healthy, stable and secure. It is a healing stone, connected with Mother Earth. Crystals are templates of light and conductors of energy. They, too, are connected with healing and with restoring harmony

and balance. Both jasper and crystals come in many colours, reflecting the wonder of diversity for this new city in the new heaven and the new earth.

The new city connects the past and the present as it brings us into the future. The number twelve (gates and foundations) and the four directions (east, north, south, and west) indicate completeness with the past still nourishing the present through the angels and tribes, the present alive in the reference to the apostles, and the future inviting us into the presence of our God and the Lamb.

The Gospel passage from John speaks about love, keeping God's word, and peace – all Easter themes but spoken by Jesus at the Last Supper before his suffering and death. Not only do Jesus's words here at the Last Supper anticipate what will happen after the resurrection, they also anticipate what will happen at Pentecost, "the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you" (Jn 14:26). Veronica Lawson rsm says so beautifully, "Jesus is the word of God in human form, the embodiment of God's communication with the cosmos. Jesus keeps God's word."

Listen in your heart to these words, "the Holy Spirit will remind you of all that I have said to you"! Remember the words of Mary and Cleopas at Emmaus, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?" (Lk 24:32). We do not always hear the words right away or understand them right way or keep remembering them. But we do not have to worry – the Spirit is always there giving us gentle reminders!

"Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid" (Jn 14:27). The founder of the Sisters of Mercy, Catherine McAuley, reflects these words in a prayer which we Sisters sing on many occasions, including our farewell to our Sisters who have begun their journey into eternal life:

My God, I am yours for time and eternity.  
Teach me to cast myself entirely  
into the arms of your loving Providence  
with a lively, unlimited confidence  
in your compassionate, tender pity.  
Grant, O most merciful Redeemer,  
That whatever you ordain or permit  
may be acceptable to me.

**Catherine McAuley**  
Gael O'Leary

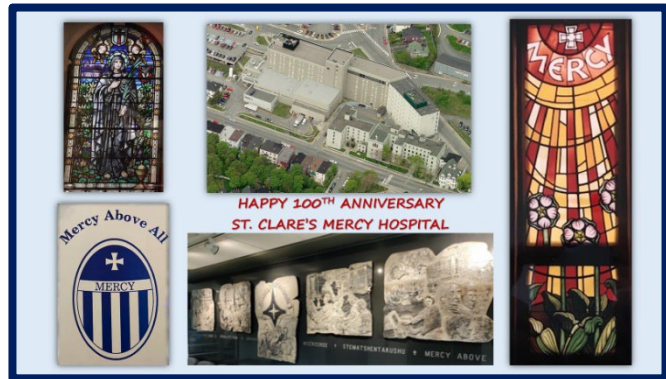


Take from my heart all painful anxiety;  
 let nothing sadden me but sin,  
 nothing delight me but the hope of coming to the possession of You,  
 my God and my all, in your everlasting kingdom.

This prayer echoes both the words of Jesus and the words from the blessing in Psalm 67 – our delightful hope that we will see God’s face.

On this one hundredth anniversary of St. Clare’s Mercy Hospital, I also use images to bring our hearts and spirits into the joy and gratitude of this day:

- i. St. Clare, the woman healer and leader after whom the hospital is named, a hospital founded by women as a place of healing
- ii. the stained-glass window with the pitcher plant linking St. Clare’s to its place in our beloved province and a Mercy cross reflecting the tradition of the Sisters of Mercy – both connected with each other by vibrant colours of green, gold, red, white and black, marking the inclusion and creativity born from this connection
- iii. Gerald and Esther Squires’ ceramic, *For Mercy Has a Human Heart*, with its panels showing the hospital’s history, mission, and ministry; the word *Mercy* engraved in our most-used languages: English, Innu-aimun, Inuttitut, French, and Mi’kmaq; and the final scroll, “God’s mercy is from generation to generation”
- iv. the Hospital’s motto, “Mercy Above All” which speaks to the spirit, energy, and dreams of all the people who have come through the doors of St. Clare’s whether as members of its diverse community, as patients, or as loved ones of the patients.



This anniversary of one of our most precious Mercy ministries, celebrated in these Easter days in which it began, reminds us of the strengths of our past, the hope of our present, and the promise for the future, all held in the embrace of the God whose name is mercy. in the words of the poet, Mary Wickham rsm:

May your own need and knowing of mercy  
 lead you to its need and its knowing in others.  
 Mercy be the name;  
 Mercy be the path;  
 Mercy at the heart.  
 Ever, ever. Amen.

Happy 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary to St. Clare’s Mercy Hospital, a sacred place of healing and hope, and to all the people who have made it so!