

**Easter Sunday, 2018** (*Gospel: John 20: 1 - 18*)  
By Fr. Phil Horrigan

**There is something so very ironic** about the fact that Easter begins with the celebration of emptiness.

**On a day when our churches are full**, when our homes and tables are full of family and food, when our spirits are full – (aren't you just so over winter on this sunny day), when our liturgies are full of great music, processions and images, - we proclaim a gospel whose central concern is an emptiness that no one expected.

**The tomb is empty, the cloths are folded and set apart, and they are empty.**

**Mary runs away** from this emptiness; Peter and the other disciple run toward it. What might this all mean?

**Our tradition of faith in the resurrection**, - which is at the very heart of the Christian message and purpose, comes from these three people telling others of their experience of seeing nothing.

**But it was in confronting that emptiness** that they came to believe fully in what it meant to know this Jesus, and in what it meant to live in a different way.

**Mary's recognition**, according to the gospel story, happened quickly; for Peter and the others it was later. **The move from emptiness to fullness can take some time.**

**But isn't this the way that Jesus taught us?** Doesn't this get at the very core of what Jesus did? Isn't this the way that Jesus turned things upside down?

**When he saw emptiness**, didn't he bring fullness of hope, and promise, and new life?

Didn't he restore life to those whose lives were empty, - of love, recognition, peace, health, and self-worth?

**He saw the thirst** of the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well, and promised a new spring of life to well up inside her. And she begged for that kind of life always.

**He saw the inconsolable grief** of Mary and Martha, and restored Lazarus to them, and restored life itself to Lazarus.

**He saw the darkness** of the blind man and gave him the fullness of sight and the colors of life for the first time.

**He saw the utter rejection** of the leper and gave him a reason to hope and the freedom to belong to the community that had shunned him.

**He saw the sin of the paralytic** and gave him the power to leap for joy with a redemptive forgiveness.

**He saw the hatred** of his torturers and forgave them, restoring what little dignity they had.

**When he came upon emptiness** he emptied himself and gave the fullness of health, love and life. "It is for this that I have come," he said, "so that the glory of God might be revealed."

**And it is because of this Jesus that we have come to this place today.**

**If we are not ready to really see** what emptiness means, we ought to run away, - because it means a great deal, a great deal to our life, beginning today.

**We are called to be free of** the hardness of life when it holds us down; to be free of the desires for revenge when it grips our heart and keeps out love; to be free of the belief that we are gods – even busy gods; and to be free of the despairing thought that we cannot be good or do good.

**Our hunger in** life can be easily filled at any table; but our hunger **for** life can only be fulfilled in the meal of this table.

**Out alienation from** whoever is not overcome by joining a club, but being true to our baptism that makes us all one before God, and each other.

**Our bitterness of heart** is not healed by forgetting, but by a forgiveness that changes hearts. **Our anxieties** and frustrations are not resolved by Feng Shui, but by trust in the Lord.

**That's what it means to celebrate Easter!**

**That's why we can sing and dance**, and dress in great colors, and offer peace, and embrace each other, and really, really mean it when we say "Have a Happy Easter!" Even the custom of **coloring Easter eggs** is about new life – one of the customs not invented by Hallmark! **My friends, there is a new** beginning in the earth today, - there is a new beginning in us. And it's because the tomb is empty.

**If Jesus was still there** we would be the most pitiable of people, and like Mary we would be left to weep, because there would only be death to run from, and no life to run toward.

**But emptiness is not nothingness.** Emptiness is a sign of something that has been present and is now elsewhere. **The emptiness of Easter** is a sign of life, but life elsewhere.. "He is not here, he is among the living," among us. **And life ongoing**

**Today, and every day because of today**, you and I have the right and the privilege to say, - as we look at this table, as we look into this book, as we touch the fullness of the font, as we gaze at the flame of this magnificent candle, and especially as we look at each other – "I have seen the Lord!"

Tell everybody!

*Phil Horrigan*