

Easter Vigil

April 3, 2021

The three women in today's gospel did not hide in the Upper Room with Jesus' other disciples after the crucifixion. They risked going to his tomb before daybreak on the day after the Sabbath to anoint his corpse. We can only imagine the agony, the sorrow, the disillusionment of these three friends and disciples of Jesus. They had witnessed great injustice and brutality in Jesus' being condemned to a terrible death on the cross. But they were determined to perform one more act of kindness for his body.

Pope Francis has said that, in imagining this scene, "we can see in the faces of those women. . .the faces of mothers and grandmothers, of children and young people who bear the grievous burden of injustice and brutality -- walking the streets of our cities, feeling the pain of dire poverty, the sorrow born of exploitation and human trafficking. We can also see the faces of those who are greeted with contempt because they are immigrants, deprived of country, house and family." We see the faces of those who have lost loved ones or classmates to senseless violence. Often a sense of helplessness leads to feelings of hopelessness and despair.

Can things really be different in our society today? Is change possible when the problems have such deep roots? We must be realistic. But as Christians we also must have faith in God's words!

When they arrive at the tomb, the three women see that the stone sealing its entrance has been removed! A young man clothed in a white garment tells them that Jesus of Nazareth is risen! They will see him again in Galilee! God has broken into human history. He offers new possibilities! The risen Lord ushers in a new age, the age of mercy and compassion – the age of justice and peace.

The Lord is risen! The Lord is alive! He is in our midst right now! As missionary disciples of the risen Lord, we have hope – trusting in God's promises to be with us always. Pope Francis says that the Lord "wants us to rise again in all those faces that have buried hope, buried dreams, buried dignity." In baptism and confirmation, the Holy Spirit empowers us to walk in the light of Christ, not in the darkness of the world – to proclaim the truth and not fake news – to overcome hatred and violence with love and peace. Jesus Christ has risen! Alleluia!