

**4<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY OF EASTER - C - 2007**  
*“The rest of the story...”*

Do you remember my Easter homily? Of course you don't. As I recall, I said something like, *“Today (Easter Sunday) the message is just the astounding news, ‘He is risen!’ And that should be enough for one day. In fact, the Church is going to take 50 days to tell the rest of the story.”*

Remember that? Well, I thought it would be fun to tell the rest of that Easter story, at least through the octave of Easter. That is what we call the week after Easter. The Church's liturgy treats those eight days (octave) as though they were all Easter Sunday. And since most of you didn't come to Mass during Easter week, there are parts of the story you may not have heard.

Remember, for the Church, it is still Sunday morning. In Matthew's account, read on Monday, we see the women running to the tomb, half overjoyed and half fearful. And they run right into Jesus who says to them, *“Peace.”* They pay him homage. Jesus says, *“Don't be afraid. Go tell the brothers.”* Now, at the very same moment, the guards are running to tell the chief priests and elders what had happened. Can you imagine what those religious leaders felt when they heard the news that Jesus was alive? They probably said things like *“Jeepers!”* So they developed a strategy to hide the truth by bribing the guards to say that someone had stolen the body. Matthew's point: The tomb wasn't just empty. The women actually saw Jesus. He spoke to them. He was alive! Even the guards knew it!

In St. John's account of that same morning, read on Tuesday, he lets Mary Magdalene take center stage. She is at the door of the tomb weeping because she thought someone have taken Jesus' body. As she turns to leave, there is Jesus standing before her, but she doesn't recognize him until he speaks her name, *“Mary.”* And she says, *“Teacher!”* And Jesus says, *“Don't*

*cling to me...*” “*Go tell my brothers.*” John’s point: Jesus is not a corpse come alive. He is transformed. That’s why Mary didn’t recognize him. He was different now, and so their relationship would have to be different, too. He is risen to new life, a new life that she would share in as well.

On Wednesday of the Octave of Easter, we read St. Luke’s story of two disciples leaving Jerusalem in absolute despair. They had lost whatever faith they had in Jesus. They were going to salve their wounds at the spa in Emmaus. In other words, they were on their way to Las Vegas. A stranger meets them right where they are, on the road of despair, and gets them to tell what had happened in Jerusalem. Then he shows them from Moses and the prophets that those things had to happen. They were all a part of God’s plan unfolding, a plan that would redeem the world. At supper, they recognize Jesus in the breaking of the bread, and then, with faith restored, they went back to Jerusalem to tell the others. Luke’s point: Jesus makes sense out of tragedy and the stories of the women. Jesus remains with us in the Eucharist every time we break the bread. Jesus is with us on our journey today.

On Thursday, Luke continues his story as he tells of Jesus appearing to all the disciples and showing the place of the nails in his hands and feet. To show he was alive, he ate some fish, and then he opens the scriptures so everyone could see that what was happening was all the unfolding of God’s plan for a fallen humanity. But there is more. Jesus tells them that they now have the job of proclaiming to the world what they have seen and heard, and to bring his mercy to all nations. In other words, “*I’m giving you a job to do that will change the world!*” This is the mission of the church.

On Friday we return to St. John’s gospel and hear Peter’s threefold profession of love and Jesus’ command, “*Feed my sheep.*” Juan spoke of this

last Sunday. The church needs leaders who not only believe that Jesus lives, but also leaders who have hearts of love like Jesus' heart.

On Saturday, Mark gives a summary of the resurrection accounts. And the week reaches its climax on Sunday, the octave of Easter. It is the profession of faith of Thomas when he looks at the risen Jesus standing before him and says, "*My Lord and my God!*" Then Jesus says, "*You believe Thomas, because you have seen. Blessed are they who have not seen and yet believe.*" That's us! Everything hangs on this. If we truly believe, we get it. If we just go through the motions, we don't. When we get it, we can't help ourselves. Our lives are transformed. When we don't get it, at best we just play religion using Christian words.

All of these resurrection stories have one critical element. Since they have experienced the risen Jesus, they are sent to do something about it. Singing "*alleluia*" isn't enough. They have to spread the good news. Many of us would prefer that Christianity didn't ask us to do anything, except just worry about ourselves and have God come to help us when we needed help. But Jesus said, "*Go into the whole world and proclaim the good news to all creation.*" Mission is not optional. It goes with the package.

The mission of our parish flows directly from this commission. But we can't do everything. Parishes must unite so we can do together what we can't do alone. This is the point of the Annual Catholic Appeal. The Archdiocese supports 63 ministries to bring hope to those who turn to us in need. The letter you received this past week from Archbishop Brunett indicated some of these ministries, like to the imprisoned, to those suffering from AIDS, and to campus ministries at the University of Washington and Western. The Annual Catholic Appeal funds our Marriage Tribunal, which has helped many couples in this parish. It provides support to youth through CYO camping and

athletics and Catholic Schools. Catholic Community Services could not function without the Annual Catholic Appeal. Easter is about bringing hope for our world. We are here today because someone shared the good news with us. It is all gift. Now we must share with others.

## THE ASK