

Easter Sunday The Resurrection of the Lord - Be Easter People, Practice Resurrection

April 17, 2022.

Easter is divine: celebrating the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, altered the past and shaped the future. It is a season of fifty days: from Easter Eve to Ascension of the Lord (40days) and to the Day of Pentecost (another 10 days). During this season there is no fasting, and the word “**alleluia**” (praise the Lord) is said or sung repeatedly, which contrasts sharply with the season of Lent when the alleluia is omitted. **"We are Easter people and Alleluia is our song!"** These words of St. Augustine express the joy that comes with this irreversible victory of Easter. This grace is not only joyful, but it is also transforming - it changes lives.

Recently, I read a poem “**Manifesto: The Mad Farmer Liberation Front**” by Wendell E Berry, an American novelist, poet, essayist, environmental activist, cultural critic, and farmer. He is a recipient of The National Humanities Medal and received many other accolades. The poem is about the life and charity work of a farmer:

“So, friends, every day do something that won't compute. Love the Lord. Love the world. Work for nothing. Take all that you have and be poor. Love someone who does not deserve it. Give your approval to all you cannot understand. Praise ignorance. Ask the questions that have no answers. Invest in the millennium. Plant sequoias. Say that your main crop is the forest that you did not plant, that you will not live to harvest. Say that the leaves are harvested when they have rotted into the mold. Call that profit. Prophecy such returns. Put your faith in the two inches of humus that will build under the trees every thousand years. Listen to carrion – put your ear close, and hear the faint chattering of the songs that are to come. Expect the end of the world. Laugh. Laughter is immeasurable. Be joyful though you have considered all the facts. Be like the fox who makes more tracks than necessary, some in the wrong direction. Practice resurrection.”

It's ending phrase “**Practice Resurrection**” is eye-catching. What does it really mean and how? I bet Wendell is referring to Christ's Resurrection and how it transforms our lives.

There are two true stories about lives that were transformed by Christ's resurrection. The first is about a working-class man with almost no education. He tried to make something better out of his humble, poor life, by going to work for a friend who was starting a new company. He was hoping for a new lease on life, but it didn't work out. In fact, his friend was arrested and thrown in prison, wrongly condemned for a crime he didn't commit. In the end, he was brutally killed by a furious mob. The working class man was discouraged and afraid that the same thing might happen to him. So he disowned his old friend and, dejected, went back to his former life. The second true story is about a woman of ill repute who had squandered her abundant gifts. She never got respect, and never did anything to deserve any. A slave to her own sin, she cried herself to sleep night after night. She simply couldn't imagine a better life than the one she was living. Then she met someone who gave her hope - the same man from the first story, who was starting a new business. She also went to work for him, trying to get a new lease on life. But then he was murdered, and her hope was extinguished, like the fragile flame of a candle in the wind. And what happened next? By now you will have guessed who the two were. Well, the woman's name is St Mary Magdalene, and the man is St Peter.

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark...things happen early in the morning. Mornings are mystical and sacred, but not this morning. Mary Magdalene did not want to get out of bed but the glowing sky in the east was calling. Sitting on her bed Mary said the customary prayer; “**Blessed are you Lord God, Ruler of the Universe. I offer thanks to You, living and eternal King, for You have mercifully restored my soul within me; Your faithfulness is great.**” (Modeh Ani, traditional Jewish first prayer of the day.) But the words didn't offer the usual comfort. She felt that the last few days seemed a blur. The Passover meal seemed

so long ago. Jesus' strange words that night as he passed the bread, **"Do this in remembrance of me"**, now made eerie sense. She didn't really think it would happen. But he was gone. They had come for him. Right there in the garden that held so many happy memories, so many stories. Then he was gone. She had followed the next day, in disbelief with the other women, as he made the slow agonizing walk to his death. Mary had stood there numb and in shock as they drove the nails, as he breathed his last. She had comforted his mother. She followed to the garden as they laid him in the tomb. It was finished. But the burial rites needed to be done. Sabbath meant they couldn't do the customary anointing. But today, early on the first day of the week while it was still dark, she had a job to do. She made her way down the street to the waiting women in a slow procession to the garden, to the tomb. To their awe, the stone had been rolled away! It was empty! How could this be? What have they done? They have taken him. One final insult from the people who had robbed her of her friend, her teacher.

Mary ran to Simon Peter. **"They have taken him!"** is all she could get out. She ran back to the empty tomb with Peter and other disciple. She came out and the flood of tears came. Then a voice from behind her: **"Woman! Why are you weeping? Who are you looking for?"** That voice sounded familiar, but it couldn't be. **"They have taken him! Do you know where?" "Mary!"** That voice. The familiar voice of the impossible. **Rabbouni?** How can this be? This is not possible. **"Destroy this temple and in three days it will be rebuilt,"** now echoed in her head. He's alive! Jesus is risen! **"Go Mary. Tell the others."** New tears of joy rushed out as she ran to tell the good news. **"I have seen the Lord! I have seen the Lord!"**

Mary Magdalene expected to find death but instead found new life. We have stood in Mary Magdalene's shoes. We know only too well what it means to expect death but find new life. We know what it feels like to follow on Good Friday only to be confronted with Easter Sunday. We have stood there peering into the empty tomb with the stone rolled away experiencing the impossible. The thing is, we don't go looking for resurrection — resurrection finds us. **Jesus' resurrection is about God loving us so much that God is willing to go to any length to find us in all the wrong places. Because like Mary, we go looking for God in the familiar, in the places we expect to find God. But in Jesus' resurrection God finds us when we are down and out, when we are at the end of our rope, when all hope seems lost.** God rolls back the stones that bind us and set us free. God is in charge. It is His world and he has breathed eternity into our bones. God stands waiting, calling us to new life, calling us to "Go and tell." **Resurrection has no meaning, no purpose unless like Mary Magdalene we go and tell it! This is the best way to give thanks to God for the gift of his life within us. Resurrection has no meaning if we cannot share the Good News of Easter to a world living in Good Friday! Resurrection has no meaning unless we are willing to live as Easter people, practising resurrection by allowing ourselves to be sent out into the world to proclaim the Good News of Christ's love.** As Pope Francis said in his General Audience on April 13, 2022, **"Easter is the true feast of God and humanity, because the peace that Christ gained on the cross in giving himself is distributed to us. Therefore, the Risen Christ, on Easter Day, appears to the disciples, and how does he greet them? "Peace be with you!" (Jn 20:19-21). This is the greeting of Christ victorious, the Risen Christ."**

Brothers and sisters in Christ, in truth resurrection isn't an event, it is an experience. We are called to go and tell not only with our lips but also with our lives. Go and tell of the resurrection power of God's love and hope. We need to practice being witnesses to resurrection in a world clinging to Good Friday! This Easter, let's open our whole self — heart, soul, mind, and strength — to God's inspiring call to new life and renewed love. May we feel God luring us, prompting us, calling us and encouraging us — each day and in each new present moment — to practice resurrection. **"We have seen the Lord!"** Alleluia! Amen.