

April 21, 2019  
Easter

Let him easter in us,  
Be a dayspring to the dimness of us,  
Be a crimson-cressed east.

- Gerard Manley Hopkins



Dear Sisters and Associates,

May Christ indeed easter in us at this sacred season of the year! May each of us find ourselves open and receptive to the transformational work of grace in our lives. A number of years ago, just after Easter, a woman who came for spiritual direction walked in, looking very much like Easter had happened in her. She told me she had recently attended a conference that really opened her eyes. What she heard was that the image of God was in her, waiting for her to let it come alive. This woman had lived in very repressive situations and spent all of her life feeling that she would never measure up to what her parents, her husband, or God wanted of her. “I didn’t realize,’ she said, “that there was already something sacred in me. This makes everything different.” It does indeed!

The Scriptural accounts of Easter are all about seeing and hearing in new ways – in ways that make everything different for the persons in these narratives and for us who long to live their mystery. Mary Magdalene comes to “see” Jesus in a new way, as does Thomas, and the disciples in the upper room. Yet we miss the point when we hear these stories only as accounts of someone else’s experience. They are very much about ourselves, as well. The resurrection is not something we simply stand outside of and believe about Jesus. We are meant not only to believe in Jesus’ resurrection, but to *participate* in it. We are, in fact, commissioned to set free the healing energy of Christ.

The resurrection accounts in John’s gospel make this commission particularly clear. A book by Sandra Schneiders, IHM (*Jesus Risen in our Midst*) helped me to hear two of these texts in a new light. We probably all have lines of Scripture that we find confusing or disturbing. One of mine had always been in the account of Jesus’s conversations with Mary Magdalene in the garden. I had never particularly cared for Jesus’s words to Mary, “Do not touch me.” They sound cold. Schneiders interprets these words as part of a commissioning. In the biblical

Greek, word order can be very telling. In this case, it translates literally, “Not me touch.” Instead, Jesus sends Mary to the other disciples. It’s a way of saying, “Go touch the community. Touch them with the good news. Touch them with hope. Touch them with the awareness that I am with you in a new way.” The new mode of experiencing Jesus is in the community, in those to whom one is sent. It is also in actively engaging in the mission.

To use Hopkins’ words, as we celebrate this Easter season, where and when are we aware of Christ “eastering in us?” To whom do we find ourselves sent with a message of hope, a message of the enlivening presence of God? And who touches us with hope and renewed energy? At the Easter vigil each year, we pass the light from the Easter candle to the person next to us, lighting up an often darkened space – a beautiful symbol of our mission to bring hope, blessing, and light to our world. It is a clear reminder that we participate in the Resurrection. Jan Richardson, in a poem based upon the story of Mary Magdalene in the garden, asks:

*So why do you linger?*

*You have seen,  
and so you are  
already blessed.*

*You have been seen,  
and so you are  
the blessing.*

*There is no other word  
you need.*

*There is simply  
to go  
and tell.*

*There is simply  
to begin.           – “Seen,” in Circles of Grace*

May each of us find ourselves open to participating in the Resurrection wherever we are, in whatever way we find ourselves being the blessing and receiving the blessing in others.

Blessing in this Easter season,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "S. Barb".

S. Barb L., for the Council