

**Easter Sunday – Year B – April 12, 2009**  
**Acts 10:34-43; Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24; 1 Corinthians 15:1-11; Mark 16:1-8**  
**Susan E. Wilmot**

Alleluia! Christ is Risen. The Lord is Risen indeed. Alleluia!

The angel said to Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and to Salome, "Do not be alarmed..." Biblical appearances of angels are often accompanied by words like fear not, or do not be afraid. Seeing a man robed in white sitting in the strangely opened tomb of Jesus would certainly give me a fright. Too stunned to speak, the women listen to what the angel says, and then flee the scene quickly in abject terror and amazement. It is terrifying. The women watched Jesus die on the cross. They probably helped Joseph wrap Jesus' body in the linen shroud. Then Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James saw where the body was laid in the garden. They saw Jesus sealed into a rocky tomb. And now He is gone. There is only the splendid angel robed in white telling them that Jesus is risen. No wonder they ran for it and were mute with fear.

This all makes my mild and irrational fear of spiders look pretty lame. What about you? What do you fear, anything or nothing in this world? According to at least one website here are the top ten things that Americans fear. At number ten is fear of water. At number nine – brontophobia. That's the fear of thunder and lightening. You definitely don't want to live on the Mountain if you belong in that category! Number eight on the list is fear of flying. Enochlophobia is number seven. Can you guess what that is? It's fear of crowds. A fear of tunnels or bridges is number six. Half way in the top ten is my eight-legged friend arachnophobia. The number four fear is of heights, acrophobia by name. Into the top three now, drum roll please. Claustrophobia comes next. At number two, is ophidiophobia. For those who didn't swallow the dictionary for breakfast, that's a fear of snakes. And the number one fear of Americans is – glossophobia. And in case that doesn't help, glossophobia is fear of public speaking. Frankly, I was surprised not to find fear of death in the top ten list. However, that doesn't mean it isn't in your personal top ten, along with lots of other things that didn't make the national list. The problem with our fears is that they tend to be bigger in our minds than they deserve to be. They paralyze us, force us to limit the way we live, or to change our lifestyle to accommodate or avoid the object of our fear. In other words, at their worst, our fears can hold us hostage, and stop us from living life to the fullest. The angel tells the women not to be alarmed. It's an important lesson, so important that the word is used several times in Gospel reading.

Jesus' incarnation and resurrection are *the* most complete communication or revelation of who God is and what God desires for each of us that the world will ever know. This is God's multi-media, multi-dimensional gift of grace and freedom, given before we even understood what multi-media and multi-dimensional even meant! God doesn't need a PowerPoint presentation or expensive audio-visual equipment. God just needs the person of Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit. God's message is spelled out for us in flesh and blood, in the Word made flesh. God's purpose is revealed in the life and deeds of His only Son, Jesus our Lord. God's answer to a world of sin, fear and death is new and unending life, through the victory of the resurrection. Jesus is born into the world, fully human yet fully divine. By His example, Jesus gives us all we need to live in the fullness of God's love. He gives us the great commandment that sums up all the Law and the prophets: love God and love one another. He touches our hearts through His humility and His compassion. Jesus transforms our lives by His steadfast love and faithfulness, His fearless pursuit of justice and peace, and through His courage in living and in dying. Jesus teaches others in the Way – apostles and disciples -- so that we may continue His work in the world. Even though Christ is rejected and murdered out of fear, God does not let that be the end. All this so that you and I may

also know and be changed in that knowledge through the power of the Holy Spirit. All this so that you and I may also share the Good News. The message of Jesus' resurrection tells us in the most explicit, the most complete, and the most graceful way possible that God is love, God is the giver of abundant life, God is hope, and God is in control.

The Reverend W.P. Lemon of Newark once said, "Easter is not a passport to another world; it is a quality of perception for this one." The work of salvation -- once for all -- is completed through Jesus' life, death and resurrection. Now we may be tempted to sit back and delight in this incredible gift made real in our faith. But Jesus is not content that we simply become aware, without any action or transformation, and nor should we be. He tells us to go ahead to Galilee, because there is work to be done, and the story continues. How do you and I move from faith to the fulfillment of Jesus' command?

Each one of us is born anew through our Baptism into Christ's death and resurrection. In this we become members of Christ's Body and the Holy Spirit continues to transform each of us into Christ-likeness. Today we welcome Anna Lee as the newest member of the Body of Christ. Like her, we are to be willing and active participants in this transformation, exploring our faith, in the way Anna Lee explores the world around her. It is not just for our sake, but for the sake of reconciling the whole world to God in Christ. As disciples of Jesus, we remain a part of a sin-sick and fear-filled world, even as we share in working towards the glorious fulfillment of Christ's mission. You and I are empowered to drive out fear through God's perfect love; bringing others to faith in Christ, and the blessing of new and eternal life in Him. You and I are called to share the hope of the Good News.

As we hear and affirm in our Baptismal vows, know that we do not accomplish these things alone. We have been made into the community of the new covenant, because we need one another. With the support of this community, and the love and prayers of the whole Body of Christ in the world, we continue in Christ's teaching and in fellowship, especially in the fellowship of Holy Communion. We resist evil, and when we sin we repent and return to the Lord. We proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ. We seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving our neighbors as ourselves. We strive for justice and peace and respect the dignity of all people. To each part of this covenant, in one voice, we respond: "I will, with God's help."

With God's help, the women who go to anoint Jesus' body learn the important lesson that Christ's love cannot be sealed in a tomb, it is boundless. Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome run from the angel in terror and amazement. In Christ, there is nothing to fear. However, in the reality that we share in our daily lives, where fear is rampant, and joy is sometimes hard to find, there is a resurrection message for us today. You and I must let go of our fears, and boldly go out into the world as Christ's messengers bearing the Good News of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior of all. He is risen! Alleluia! Alleluia!