

## Easter Sunday (A)

What have we found this morning on Easter? In John's gospel it was still dark when Mary Magdalene came to the tomb. People generally know better than to step into a dark place alone, man or woman. That makes sense to me. She runs for the men, thinking that robbers had stolen Jesus body. Smart woman! She tells Peter and the beloved disciple and they come running to the tomb. What they find defies belief. The other disciple who gets there hesitates before entering. He ponders what he sees. If he disturbs the linen wrappings he will be alone in his witness to the resurrection. Peter runs by his friend and beholds the linens just as they were wrapped around Jesus body except for the head wrapping that had been rolled up and put away separately. Grave robbers don't usually take the time to do that. So far it's all unbelievable! Yet Peter and the other disciple believe because they finally connect the scriptures.

A letter from my former Bishop, George Packard, writes of this past Maundy Thursday: "Holy Week has the ironic coincidence of being the setting for the anniversary of the Iraq War five years ago and I was startled at the level of grief I had at a local memorial service yesterday for those who had died in this conflict. Yet I have Easter hope - I can't exactly explain why — having seen this past weekend how elements of the Fourth Infantry Division bravely deployed from Fort Hood, Texas for their third rotation.

Hope, a wise priest said to me recently, is located in a "found Christ."

When we need hope the most, whether in grief or in joy when an event is too good to be true, what sustains hope is when we find meaning and purpose, evidence that God is present. After the horror of Jesus affliction and death and all hope seems lost, what Christians need to see is that life does continue.

We may not be as convinced as the two men at the tomb or Mary Magdalene who was the first to see Jesus. We are not privy today of such evidence. Like the first to find Christ, we like they must believe and be looking to find Him. I pray that the Holy Spirit could use the words he gives me but in the end to persuade you, you must crack the egg, or the stone must be rolled away, and then you must enter into the darkness to find Jesus risen and alive.

The question comes, "What then do we do when we enter the darkness to find him?"

Mary has told us. She stays around in her grief hoping for some answer as to where her Lord has been taken. We know she finally peers into the tomb and has a vision of angels sitting inside. She is left wondering what happened knowing only "he is not here." Perhaps the scriptures have not come to her mind the way they did with the two men. Nevertheless, she keeps searching. "He is not here." She turns and is asked for the second time the same question by a stranger: "Why are you weeping?" It is then that her eyes and heart are opened when she hear her name and the man is one no longer a stranger. Hope is realized. Life does continue. Evil and suffering are put on their heads. And the longing for Jesus bursts from Mary in a long embrace.

The USS New York LPD 21 is a brand new Navy ship. It is the fifth in a new class of warship - designed for missions that include special operations against terrorists.

It was built with 24 tons of scrap steel from the former World Trade Center.

Steel from the World Trade Center was melted down in a foundry in Amite, LA to cast the ship's bow section. When it was poured into the molds on Sept. 9, 2003 , Navy Capt. Kevin Wensing, said "It was a spiritual moment for everybody there. Those big rough steelworkers treated it with total reverence."

Junior Chavers, the foundry operations manager, said that when the trade center steel first arrived, he touched it with his hand and the "hair on my neck stood up. It had a big meaning to it for all of us," he said.

The ship's motto? 'Never Forget.' We all hope that one day those tons of steel can be turned into tools for construction of new homes, windmills and solar panels to power those homes, for only then evil will have been fully reversed to spell "live."

Live! Live fully into the hope as you search for Christ who is Risen Indeed! Live! Live into the hope of his resurrection that turns weeping into utter joy and gives birth to new life. Live! And bring new life into your family, friends and to strangers who are suffering without hope. And when you find Jesus alive in your heart "never forget" where you came from and give thanks to God who loves you and gave his life that your life might be reborn.

The egg is cracked. There is life inside. God invites you to take, eat, and see that He is good. AMEN.

