

## **An Unexpected Easter** by Fr. Randy

*How has your Easter celebration been for you this year?*

It has been unconventional and unexpected, to say the least! Even in this time of physical distancing and in some cases social isolation, I have been trying my best to keep in touch with many persons. I know all of you have likewise been making connections in old and new ways—virtual Zoom meetings, Face Time, telephone calling trees, and even old fashion handwritten notes of comfort and support. We are a blessed people to have such a deeply caring, compassionate, and loving faith family at St. Christopher's.

Persons in our community, state, country, and world-wide are doing our best to deal with a pandemic crisis that at times seems to be an invisible and insidious foe. Leaders in science and medicine, government and public policy, and in our own communities are uniting to stop the suffering and death dealt by the COVID-19 virus. Parents are being asked to stay at home for extended periods of time, providing educational support to their own children in their own homes. We have learned new definitions of just who essential workers are—not just medical professionals and public safety folks, but others among us like grocery store workers, teachers, sanitation, construction, water & sewer utilities, and energy/internet providers. Each one of us has a mission critical role in our world in times of crisis.

I have been tasked in my other professional role to work as the state incident manager in the State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC). I engage state and federal agency representatives and decision-makers in the support and provision of critical resources to continue this monumental pandemic fight. Requests and demands for material support continually outstrips the available resources. We are deeply aware that each request represents a true need by individual people—persons just like you and me. My work days in the SEOC begin before sunrise and end well after sunset. It seems I am living in a world of physical darkness and extreme solitude, as the downtown streets are eerily quiet and silent—a Holy Week of solitude.

Yesterday, a colleague shared a short video clip of his two young children—ages four and two—as he found them in their kitchen soon after they woke up. Both

were in their red and white striped pajamas, the older wearing a play stethoscope in his ears. He placed the scope on his younger sister's chest and said, "I am checking to be sure you don't have *'the bugs'*." He immediately followed up with the reassurance, "Don't be afraid—we will be OK."

The people of Jerusalem began the week with a joyous, palm-waving parade of welcome to their Messiah. As the days unfolded in this Holy Week, fear and suspicion grew and took hold in and among the people and the powerful. His followers had heard the stories, witnessed the miracles, and heard the promise of this most unexpected and unconventional itinerant rabbi from a back-country village. One of his own disciples betrayed him, and he was brought up on false charges to be tried, to be denied by his followers, to suffer death on the cross, and be placed in the tomb. His disciples scattered in fear and disillusionment. Yet, his words lingered in their hearts and minds, "Don't be afraid"—we will be OK.

This morning, I awoke to an Unexpected Easter—one dressed in the glory and brightness of the Eastertide season—made complete with a blanket of liturgically white snow! *"He is risen! Alleluia, Christ is risen! The Lord is risen indeed. Alleluia!"*

*Almighty God, who for our redemption gave your only-begotten Son to the death of the cross, and by his glorious resurrection delivered us from the power of our enemy: Grant us so to die daily to sin, that we may evermore live with him in the joy of his resurrection; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen. (BCP pg. 295)*

Don't be afraid—we will be OK!

*Romans 6:8-11 assures us, "...if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. The death he died, he died to sin, once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus."*

I pray that each and all of us hold fast to the promise of eternal life in the power of Jesus' resurrection. May you be abundantly blessed in this Unexpected Easter.

Peace and all things good. Randy+