

[Acts 10:34a, 37-43; Ps.118; Col 3:1-4 or 1 Cor. 5:6b-8; John 20:1-9]

What do YOU find when you look into the empty tomb of Easter? What is there? Shock, despair, or outrage are all typical responses to an empty room -- or to an empty tomb. Standing within the emptiness, we realize how full our lives were and how great is our loss. But our loss also makes us acutely aware that our most precious asset – love -- is always with us.

Do you look into the tomb and find your faith? That is the Good News of Easter. That is what we celebrate today.

Where had Jesus gone? It seems He chose to walk the earth again for a while before ascending to the right hand of God.

And -- let's hope – Jesus Christ continues to walk in each of our lives. Easter Day begins an octave, eight days that remind us that every day is Easter and that we are a people of the Resurrection who believe in love, joy, forgiveness, and life in all forms -- including the eternal variety.

Show that you believe in what the risen Christ stands for by freely sharing love, mercy, and kindness in generous portions these eight days and beyond. It's not enough to have faith: our faith must be an action verb, attracting others to Jesus Christ and His Church.

The word Easter literally means “the feast of fresh flowers”. It reminds us that everything is new; that Jesus has risen. In this weekend's first reading from the Acts of the Apostles, St. Peter shares his experience with the Risen Christ. He ate and drank with Him after Jesus rose from the dead. Peter invites us to bear witness to Jesus by our exemplary lives.

In today's Gospel, the Risen Lord reveals His glory first to an ordinary woman. She was blessed to become the first evangelizer of the Risen Lord. The Risen Lord sends Mary to evangelize His Apostles. Mary proclaims her personal experience, "I have seen The Lord!" Have YOU seen the Lord?

What's still in YOUR tomb? Are you still in it? Our dishonesty. Our hypocrisy. Our pettiness. Our selfishness. Our resentment. Our traumatic memories. Our unemployment. Our grudges. Our poisoned relationships. Our pessimism and gloomy despair. When I put it that way, the cave isn't very empty, is it? What IS in your cave?

Now chew on this: Because Jesus has nailed all of our sins on the cross with Him, because Jesus is buried with our sins – no matter how great or how small – because Jesus has triumphed over sin and death, and illness and disease and pain, we can leave all of that ugly stuff in the tomb, and roll the stone across the entrance. ALLELUIA!

The Resurrection of Jesus Christ gives us the power to do this. We can even leave in the cave the greatest of all fears – the fear of death itself. The message of Easter is that nothing can destroy us, our pain, suffering, and even death. Because Christ has conquered all these, we too can conquer all these if we commit ourselves to Jesus Christ. Come out of your tombs.

Do you need someone to accompany you? Do you need a lifeguard to guide you out? Ours walks on water!

Most of us are familiar with Mary Stevenson's poem, "Footprints in the Sand" which she wrote in 1939.

I came across a different version of that poem, called "Butt Prints in the Sand." Its author is anonymous. You will see why!

Someone gave it to me when I was recovering from my heart attack and triple by-pass back in 2010. Laughter is the best medicine!

Butt Prints in the Sand

One night I had a wondrous dream,
One set of footprints there was seen,
The footprints of my precious Lord,
But mine were not along the shore.
But then some stranger prints appeared,
And I asked the Lord, "What have we here?"
Those prints are large and round and neat,
"But Lord they are too big for feet."
"My child," He said in somber tones,
"For miles I carried you alone.
I challenged you to walk in faith,
But you refused and made me wait."
"You disobeyed, you would not grow,
The walk of faith, you would not know.
So I got tired, I got fed up,
and there I dropped you on your butt."
"Because in life, there comes a time,
when one must fight, and one must climb.
When one must rise and take a stand,
or leave their butt prints in the sand."

My Mama, who also had a wicked sense of humor like mine, often said that 5 was her lucky number. She was born on October 5. Here are 5 things that you can put in your Easter Basket this year:

Don't ruin a good today by thinking about a bad yesterday.

Let it go.

Wisdom is knowing some of the best days

have not happened yet.

Don't compare your life to others; you have no idea

what the details of their life journey have been.

When it rains, look for rainbows; when it's dark, look for stars.

Adopt the 5 by 5 rule: If it won't matter in five years,

don't spend more than 5 minutes worrying about it.

Christ is Risen! Alleluia! Happy Easter!