**Solidarity with Sisters Communal Prayer for Easter, April 4, 2021**

*“Do not cling to me.”*

**CHECK-IN** and then Betty mutes everyone. **(Suzie and Betty)**

**WELCOME (Suzie De Quattro)**

Welcome, everyone!

* Introductions – people who haven’t been here before?
* Yay to any Easter bonnets! We’re here to celebrate!
* Have a candle, candleholder, and matches?
* Betty and I had the joy of preparing today’s communal prayer.
* Thanks to Reggie Ott and Stu Sklamm for leading our music.
* Thanks to the people who will be reading and leading us in prayer today: Bill Fanelli, Anne Regan, Peggy Thompson, Richard McGinnis, Kathy Heller, Sister Jo’Ann De Quattro, Sister Jennie Lechtenberg, and Alicia Urban.

**SETTLING IN (Betty Thompson)**

As we come together, try to get as comfortable as you can. Notice your breath as it goes in and out…. Let it slow and deepen… and slowly fill you with the peace of Christ… in and out…. Let’s take a collective breath to know our togetherness. And 3 deep breaths – one to be here… one to be united in prayer… and one to welcome the joy of Jesus Christ whom we know anew today.

Now Reggie Ott will lead us into our celebration together.

**OPENING SONG**  **(Reggie Ott)**

Jesus Christ is risen today, Alleluia,
our triumphant holy day; Alleluia,
who did once upon the cross; Alleluia,
suffer to redeem our loss; Alleluia!

Hymns of praise then let us sing; Alleluia,
unto Christ our Risen king; Alleluia,
Raise your joys and triumphs high; Alleluia,

Sing, ye heav’ns, and earth reply, Alleluia!

**GREETING (Betty Thompson)**

Let us rejoice, for Jesus Christ is risen! Alleluia! Alleluia!

All: Christ is risen indeed! Alleluia! Alleluia!

**CALL TO WORSHIP / GATHERING PRAYER** **(Betty T. & Suzie and Jim De Quattro)**

**Betty:** Our focus during the forty days of Lent was moving from darkness into light. We are now in that light. Your light guides me and my light guides you. Together we can make abundant light for the world.

O God, teach us how to live in that light every day and share your light with others, especially with those who suffer in any kind of darkness. Teach us to inquire, nudge, and challenge each other to become radiant with the light of Christ. Amen.

**Suzie and Jim**: In the light of Christ, let us light our candles now. [Light candles.]

In this dawn of new life, we pray with words of great joy and hope that are used at the first lighting of the Easter candle. Please respond with: Christ is risen.

May our night become bright as day, dazzling and full of gladness! Christ is risen!

All of creation is rejoicing! Christ is risen!

May the power of Christ’s resurrection saturate us and our world! Christ is risen!
May Christ’s resurrection be leaven in us! Christ is risen!

May resurrection foster just and peaceful harmony! Christ is risen!

Glory to God forever! Christ is risen!

I**NTRODUCTION TO THEME (Betty Thompson / Suzie DQ)**

The last words we heard Jesus speak on Good Friday were “It is finished.” The first words we hear from Jesus in the Gospel today are to Mary: “Woman, why are you weeping?” Over Lent and during this past holy week, we have travelled with Jesus and his friends from the darkness of fear, anger and despair into the full light of Christ. Jesus is alive in a new way.

In today’s readings we look again from the mindset of God. The followers of Jesus believed Jesus was sent as the fulfillment of the prophets, exclusively for the Jewish people. We begin with Acts and hear Peter proclaiming that God does not have favorites – Jesus came for the whole of creation, not only the Jews. Peter is beginning the process of seeing Jesus in a new way.

And then in John we hear again the familiar story of Mary of Magdala. Now that the Sabbath has ended, Mary is free to go out and she rushes to the place where they took Jesus’ body. She wants to pay homage to her dear friend who has been executed. Searching with the eyes of love, she encounters Jesus alive and hears him call her by name. Putting on the mind of God lets Mary look past her expectations and find spring and resurrection.

We have acknowledged the darkness and despair of this past year marked by economic and racial discrimination and a pandemic. As vaccinations increase and Spring emerges, never has Easter felt so full of possibility and new life. How can we see the world we are awakening into today?

Beginning today and carrying on for another 50 days we encounter Jesus with new eyes – the eyes of love. Jesus brings peace and the intimacy of his very breath. We are called to put on the mindset of God and to encounter **ourselves and the world in a whole new way**. Jesus is alive. Alleluia! What metanoia are we called to see?

*(Slight pause)*

**Suzie:** Let us join the SJB Band in the joyous psalm, “This is the day the Lord has made.”

**PSALM 118 - SJB Band:** Let Us Rejoice:  <https://youtu.be/iItrgIsjRA4>

Refrain: This is the day the Lord has made;

let us rejoice and be glad.

This is the day the Lord has made;

let us rejoice and be glad.

[Repeat Refrain]

Give thanks to the Lord for he is good,

his mercy endures forever;

let the house of Israel say:

"His mercy endures forever." Refrain

The hand of the Lord has struck with pow'r,

His right hand is exalted;

I shall not die, but live anew

declaring the works of the Lord. Refrain

 The stone which the builders rejected

has become the cornerstone.

The Lord of love and mercy

has brought wonder to us all! Refrain

**Suzie:** Anne Regan will now read to us from the Acts of the Apostles, followed by questions and silence for reflection. Feel free to stay with whatever question calls you.

**READING 1** [Acts 10:34-43](https://bible.usccb.org/bible/acts/10?34) **(Anne Regan)**

Then Peter began to speak: "I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism but accepts people from every nation who revere him and do what is right.

“You know the message God sent to the people of Israel, telling the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all.

“You know what has happened throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee—

how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power,

and Jesus went around doing good and healing all those oppressed by the devil.

“We are witnesses of everything Jesus did in Judea and in Jerusalem.

“They killed him by hanging him on a tree,but God raised Jesus from the dead on the third day and caused him to be seen. He was not seen by all the people, but by witnesses whom God had already selected.

“**We are those witnesses** -- we have eaten and drunk with him after he rose from the dead.

“Jesus commissioned us to proclaim this news to the people and

tell them that Jesus is the one appointed by God as judge of the living and the dead.
To him all the prophets bear witness, that all who believe in Jesus will have their sins forgiven through his name.”

**QUESTIONS 1 (Jim De Quattro)**

How do you experience yourself as a witness to the Risen Christ?

Where are you in the Easter transition from darkness into light?

**SILENT REFLECTION** **(Betty:** Share slide 1, time 2:00, chime, stop slide.**)**

**Betty**: Now Peggy Thompson will read to us from the Gospel of John.

**GOSPEL READING: John 20:1-9 (Peggy Thompson)**

It was very early on the first day of the week and still dark, when Mary of Magdala came to the tomb. She saw that the stone had been moved away from the tomb. She came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved. “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb,” she said, “and we don't know where they have put him.”

So Peter set out with the other disciple to go to the tomb. They ran together, but the other disciple, running faster than Peter, reached the tomb first. He bent down and saw the linen cloths lying on the ground, but did not go in. Simon Peter, following him, also came up, went into the tomb, saw the linen cloths lying on the ground and also the cloth that had been over his head; this was not with the linen cloths but rolled up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple who had reached the tomb first also went in; he saw and he believed.

Till this moment they had still not understood the scripture, that he must rise from the dead. The disciples then went back home.

But Mary was standing outside near the tomb, weeping. Then, as she wept, she stooped to look inside, and saw two angels in white sitting where the body of Jesus had been, one at the head, the other at the feet. They said, “Woman, why are you weeping?” “They have taken my Lord away,” she replied, “and I don't know where they have put him.”

As she said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, though she did not realize that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Who are you looking for?” Supposing him to be the gardener, she said, “Sir, if you have taken him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will go and remove him.” Jesus said, “Mary!” She turned around then and said to him in Hebrew, “Rabbuni!” -- which means Master. Jesus said to her, “Do not cling to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to the others, and tell them: I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.”

So Mary of Magdala told the disciples, “I have seen the Lord,” and that he had said these things to her.

**QUESTIONS 2 (Jim De Quattro)**

How have you felt when your relationship with God or a close friend has come back from the dead or is somehow new?

How do you experience Jesus’ death and resurrection with the mind of our loving God, and not as atonement for our sins?

**SILENT REFLECTION** **(Betty:** Share slide 2, time 2:00, chime, stop slide.**)**

**READING 3 (Suzie)**

Today we ask ourselves again, what makes Easter our most important holy day? It is not only that 2,000 years ago, some of Jesus’ friends saw that Jesus had risen from the dead. It is much more than that. Jesus’ resurrection invites us this Easter to experience yet again our dying and living in the unending life of God.

Let’s begin with the readings. Do you notice that only a few people are able tosee Jesus in the Easter stories today and in the weeks to come? It is his friends, those who had shared his life and his journey. They had already begun the long process of metanoia. They had begun to see with God’s love. Mary and the other disciples had eyes to recognize Jesus alive beyond death.

Let’s go to the garden with Mary. She recognizes Jesus in the intimacy of hearing her name spoken with love. Mary’s grief becomes joy. It’s easy to see her reaching to hug him in the same way she used to. But imagine her surprise when Jesus says, “Do not cling to me.” This is not the same Jesus as before.

Resurrection signals momentous change. Life is transformed. Bigger. More expansive. Life that cannot be embraced in precisely the same way that we hug our own loved ones.

Resurrection is not a return to normalcy. It does not offer a reset, or a reinstatement of “the way things were.” No. Resurrected life is worthy of deeper reverence and awe. Resurrection cracks us open to let the light of new life enter.

Metanoia called us to put on the mind of God. Resurrection calls us to action.

So how **do** we live the Resurrection in a challenging time like this?

Parts of us wish to return to what used to be normal for us – but our eyes have been opened to see more of life. We feel a strong kinship with people who are oppressed and with the Earth itself. We see how our own normalcy depends on systems that can be exploitative and are inadequate, at times even sinful. No one of us is required to do everything, but we all must do something.

Two weeks ago we reflected on what God has written on your heart, on my heart. We will find our personal resurrected call at the intersection of outward needs and that deepest desire.

Mary may have felt awkward when she reached out to embrace Jesus and Jesus said, “Don’t cling to me.” For us, too, discomfort is often a sign of profound and deeply needed growth. If we fail to make the transition into resurrected life, our faith becomes rote, merely a remembrance of things past rather than a life shared now with the living Jesus and each other.

As it was for Mary of Magdala, the joy of the Risen Jesus is calling our name. This joy is for us as we rise with Jesus Christ.

*(Slight pause)*

**QUESTIONS 3 (Jim De Quattro)**

If Jesus were speaking to you, what would he say you need to stop clinging to? How does that feel?

When have you felt a joyful “aha!” as you recognized your deepest desire intersecting with a need of the world?

**SILENT REFLECTION** **(Betty:** Share slide 3, time 2:00, chime, stop slide.**)**

Betty: Now Richard McGinnis will lead our sharing.

**SHARING (Richard McGinnis)**

We invite you to briefly share what emerged in **your** heart this morning as you have reflected upon our readings and music. We welcome everyone who wants to speak, and we also know that the wisdom of this community includes both words shared and silent listening,

So let’s begin in silence as we gather our reflections. [Long-ish pause]

Now who would like to start our sharing? Remember to unmute yourself to speak and mute yourself again afterwards.

[Sharing]

[If there is silence more than about 30 seconds before anyone speaks:] Take whatever quiet you need before you speak.

[If there is extended silence during the sharing:] Is there anyone else who would like to share?  [Pause.]

[Stop by about 11:20.]

Thank you. (Slight pause) Now Bill Fanelli will lead us in prayer.

**PRAYERS OF THE COMMUNITY (Bill Fanelli)**

Let’s pause to notice the prayer that may be rising in your own heart right now. (Pause.) Who would like to begin? Our response will be: Risen One, hear our prayer.

We rejoice in the companions with whom we share the joy of Easter – each other, those we love, the Leadership Conference of Women Religious, and Christians all over the world. May God bless them! For this we pray. Risen One, hear our prayer.

We rejoice in the thoughtful, often valiant generosity of the many people who strive to be light in new and life-giving ways. For this we pray. Risen One, hear our prayer.

We pray in solidarity with people who are struggling with the effects of the pandemic, racism, economic injustice, climate change, violence and war. O God, let the seeds of goodness, courage and wisdom flourish in us, in our country, and throughout the world. For this we pray. Risen One, hear our prayer.

For what else shall we pray? Please remember to unmute and mute yourselves.

Loving God, with full hearts we entrust to you our prayers, both spoken and unspoken. We rejoice in your greatness. Amen.

Now let’s join with Stu Sklamm in the beautiful hymn, “How Great Thou Art,” after which Kathy Heller will lead us in our offertory.

**OFFERTORY HYMN: How Great Thou Art (Stu Sklamm)**

O Lord my God, when I in awesome wonder
Consider all the worlds Thy hands have made,
I see the stars, I hear the rolling thunder,
Thy pow’r throughout the universe displayed.

[Refrain] Then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to Thee,
 How great Thou art. How great Thou art!
 Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to Thee,
 How great Thou art! How great Thou art!

When through the woods, and forest glades I wander
And hear the birds sing sweetly in the trees,
When I look down, from lofty mountain grandeur
And see the brook, and feel the gentle breeze. Refrain

**OFFERTORY (Kathy Heller)**

In this Easter season, we celebrate the amazing gift of Christ fully alive within and among us. How do you offer yourself to God in gratitude for all you have been given? In the bright light of Easter, what call of resurrection do you see for yourself this week? [Pause.]

Let us pray. Generous God, Creative Spirit, we commit to sharing our time, talents, and treasures so that we may be a light and a witness to the transforming love of Jesus Christ. Amen.

**CELEBRATION OF COMMUNION (Sisters Jo’Ann De Quattro)**

This morning we celebrate that Jesus who was lifted up on the cross

has risen to new life

and shares that new life with us.

As we enter into that new life,

we hold onto the journey we have shared with Jesus this past week.

O Great Love, we are humbled and emboldened

to know that you trust us to be your body in this world.

We are part of that body as we let go of all that separates us from you,

and as we embrace one another and your entire creation with merciful love.

We give you thanks for your presence in and among us. [Pause.]

We remember the night before Jesus died.

At dinner with friends, Jesus knew all that would soon be asked of them,

and, loving them to the end, Jesus showed them how to care for each other

as they went out into the world.

First Jesus washed their feet.

Then he looked at what was in front of them, the bread and the cup,

gifts of the earth and work of human hands, and blessed them.

So let us, too, invite God right now into what is front and center in our lives

knowing that God will indeed enter what we offer – and bless it. [Pause.]

Let us invite God into ourselves so that we become God’s living presence in our world.

Holy One, you transform us as you nourish us here.

May we nourish others with your presence.

Amen.

**OUR FATHER (Sister Jennie Lechtenberg)**

Now let us join our hearts as if we could join our hands to pray in harmony with Christians throughout the world in the words that Jesus gave us:

***All (muted):*** Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be your name.

Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread

and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us,

and do not let us fall into temptation, but deliver us from evil

for the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.

**FINAL BLESSING (Alicia Urban)**

Let us extend our hands over each other as we ask God to bless us as we go forth to share the light of Christ:

**Seen**
***For Easter Day***

You had not imagined
that something so empty
could fill you
to overflowing,

and now you carry
the knowledge
like an awful treasure
or like a child
that curls itself
within your heart:

how the emptiness
will bear forth
a new world
you cannot fathom
but on whose edge
you stand.

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.

—Jan Richardson
from [*Circle of Grace: A Book of Blessings for the Seasons*](http://janrichardson.com/books)

**CLOSING – “Over My Head” (Traditional) (Reggie Ott)**

Refrain:
Over my head, I hear music in the air;
over my head, I hear music in the air;
over my head, I hear music in the air;
there must be a God somewhere!

When I think on Jesus, I hear music in the air. (3 times)

There must be a God somewhere. Refrain.

When the world is silent, I hear music in the air. (3 times)

There must be a God somewhere. Refrain

On this Easter morning, I hear music in the air. (3 times)

There must be a God somewhere. Refrain twice

**RESOURCES WE USED:**

Readings: USCCB website; Jerusalem Bible; New Jerusalem Bible; New International Version Bible

Closing blessing: Jan Richardson, [*Circle of Grace: A Book of Blessings for the Seasons*](https://www.janrichardson.com/books)

For the Reflection:

* Margaret A. Farley, RSM, Easter 2017 Catholic Women Preach <https://www.catholicwomenpreach.org/preaching/04162017>
* Sr. Mary M. McGlone, CSJ 2021 <https://www.ncronline.org/sunday-resource/april-4-2021-easter-sunday>
* Lutheran Bishop Michael Rinehart <https://bishopmike.com/2020/04/05/mary-magdalene-first-witness-to-the-resurrection-the-first-apostle/>
* Ron Rolheiser, OMI 2012 <https://ronrolheiser.com/seeing-spring-and-easter/#.YE1kp9xOnIV>
* Sr. Sandra Schneiders at Catholic Women Preach 2018 <https://www.catholicwomenpreach.org/preaching/04012018>
* Aidan Stoddert, 2020 <http://harvardichthus.org/2020/04/do-not-cling-to-me-or-on-resurrection-and-change/>