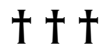


My sisters, brothers, and siblings,

“This is the day the Lord has made,  
let us rejoice and be glad in it!”



And as Fr. Greg, our beloved Pastor has said, lo these many Easters past,

“Stand firm in the Lord . . . and know this – it’s all true!  
Every bit of it – it’s all true!”

That early on the first day of the week *Jesus got up*  
“with a glory in his bosom that transfigures you and me.”

That the disciple whom Jesus loved  
*peered into* and *ventured inside* the place of death,  
and it was there his faith was provoked.

That Jesus appeared to Mary, called her by her name,  
and turned her weeping into wonder.

That the risen Lord then appeared to Peter and the twelve  
and later to Paul.

It’s all true.



So, on this day of days,  
come doubting or confident, come skeptical or believing,  
come tender or perky, come grieving or rejoicing.

Come just as you are and scoot just a little closer to the love of God –  
a love without condition, exception, or limit,  
a love that sin could not stop, evil could not defeat,

and death could not contain,  
a love that slipped through a virgin womb to become one of us  
and broke out of a virgin tomb to reside in you and me,  
a love that is not ashamed of and does not hide scars,  
a love that will seal Maddox and mark him as Christ's own forever.  
a love that is calling out to us.

So, come just a little closer to the love of God

and join the throng of that great cloud of witnesses:

*Alleluia. Christ is risen!*

***The Lord is risen indeed. Alleluia!***

Because it's all true.



Now, if this Easter proclamation comforts you, it should.

If this Easter proclamation excites you, it should.

If this Easter proclamation causes you to flinch  
and even makes you a little uncomfortable, it should.

Because this Easter proclamation is an invitation,

a beckoning toward a sacred, shattering, transformative mystery.



This Easter proclamation is an invitation to a mystery

that maintains the Gospel tension between fear and joy,  
by upholding the triumph and adoration of Palm Sunday,  
by retaining the memory of the tender, intimate foot washing,  
and the sting of Judas' betrayal and Peter's denials

on Maundy Thursday,  
by honoring the shock and pain, suffering and death,  
loss and grief, confusion and disbelief of Good Friday,  
by hallowing the destabilizing liminality of Holy Saturday.

This Easter proclamation is an invitation to a mystery

that reveals a story of which we are a part –

a mystery that contains the fullness of who we are –

each one of us –

in all our arresting beauty and appalling baseness,

a mystery that shows us who we are and why we need Jesus,

a mystery that shows us just how much *we remain*

a mystery to others *and* ourselves.

*And* that God loves us anyway.



Beloved, God loves us.

God loves me. God loves you.

On your worst day, even after your worst desire, decision or deed.

No matter how you identify, whom you love, how you feel,  
regardless of your circumstances.

Whether you are non-disabled or a person with a disability.

Whether you are housed or unhoused.

Whatever your pronouns and even if you have trouble  
reconciling how ‘they’ refers to one person.

Whatever your political affiliation.

However you interpret what's going in our country or in the world.

Whether your course is set or you've failed to launch.

Whether you're feeling good or you're at a medical crossroads.

Whether you have it all figured out

or you're holding on to life by your fingernails.

Amid job loss, divorce, long goodbyes, even death.

Whether you've come into this space carefully coifed

or tore up from the floor up.

God loves you.

*Complicated, beautiful, young, messy, precious, middle-aged, sinful,*

*inconsistent, bald, hairy, stinky, fragrant, aging, embodied you.*

God loves you.

And there's absolutely nothing you can do about it!

And because God loves you,

there is *always* a place for you here -

in this community and at this Table.

† † †

Receive this Truth. Remember this Truth. Rest in this Truth.

Lose yourself in this Truth

and let it change you for good.

For this Truth is the heart of the Eternal Truth of the Resurrection.

That the love of God -

not our philosophies or feelings,

not our petty prejudices or stupid fears,

not our history or our present circumstances  
not administrations, not even democracies –  
the love of God is the greatest power,  
and this love has a name . . . *Jesus*.

Jesus, the Lily of the Valley that blossomed in death  
like the “rose that grew from concrete.”

Jesus, the gracious Lord who met grief-stricken Mary  
with curiosity, not condemnation.

Jesus, the accessible teacher  
who called Mary by her name.

Jesus, the risen Savior  
who is in the world today.



And because He lives,  
we can face tomorrow.

Because He lives, death and pain, violence and suffering  
do not have the last word.

Because He lives,  
we can radically engage this Good Friday world.

Because He lives,  
we can “stand before a demagogue and damn  
his treacherous flatteries without winking.”

Because He lives, thank you, Fr. Greg,  
we can “stretch the boundaries

that we each try to place around God.”

Because He lives,

we can love the hell out of each other.

Because He lives, we can accompany one another

through hardship and trial, suffering and illness.

Because He lives, we can persevere . . .

we can be “troubled on every side, yet not distressed; . . .

perplexed, but not in despair; . . .

persecuted, but not forsaken; . . .

cast down, but not destroyed.”

And because He lives

we can teach Maddox how to love better,

how to lead with kindness and mercy,

how to reject evil and choose good,

how to live at full stretch,

so that one day, he, too, will say, “It’s all true!”

*Alleluia. Christ is risen!*

***The Lord is risen indeed. Alleluia!***

Amen.