



A Reflection on Easter Sunday
by Sr. Juliana Casey, IHM, Ph.D.

The Stone is Gone

In the long, painful Lenten journey, we learn that the end is not the end. Life wins. The crucified one is now the risen one. This terrible, tragic story has a happy ending. It is almost too good to be true. And it remains so.

After the death of Jesus and after the Sabbath had passed, some women go to his borrowed tomb in order to anoint the body. They were undoubtedly in despair. The one they had hoped in had been killed. Yet they wanted to honor his body, to do what they could do, and so they went to the tomb where Jesus was buried.

The tomb where Jesus had been laid was like a cave in which bodies were to be placed. Its entrance was secured with a large stone. One person could not move the stone. If the women were to attend to Jesus' body, they knew they would need someone to roll it back. However, when they arrived at the tomb, the stone had been moved.

They looked into the tomb and were astonished. The body of Jesus was not there, but an angel was. Accounts of this encounter differ in details; however, each account has the angel saying the same three things: "He has been raised." "Do not be afraid." "Go, tell the others."

With these three admonitions, the meaning of Lent is finally clear. The length to which God's love will go is made visible in God's Son. This love will carry us and all our sin, our weakness, our blindness and smallness into and through death.

All the worst that can happen to us, all the worst that we can do ... these are held by Jesus as he cries "forgive them." Because that love is stronger than anything, God raises Jesus from the dead. God's love is life, and life for us. God's love is stronger than anything we can do to thwart it. "He has been raised."

The second message, do not be afraid, addresses the state of the women. They were astonished, confused, bewildered and frightened. Just as the angel's first statement was meant for all of us, so too was the second. The triumph of life in the raising of Jesus can take away our fear as well. All is forgiven. Mercy and love triumph. God's loving kindness is stronger than everything—even death. We need no longer fear. Our hearts can be at ease in this mercy.

(over)



Lenten Reflections

Finally, the angel tells the women to go and tell the others. With these words, the angel gives the call to discipleship, to proclamation. Now we understand why the gospels are called “Good News.” They are a story filled with conflict, misunderstanding, suffering and altogether bad behavior. They are also a story of healing, of sensitivity, of welcome, of compassion, of constancy of love, of strength amidst weakness, of life in death. God has shown the lengths to which God will go to save us and draw us close.

The stone has gone. That which has blocked us all our lives has been rolled away. That which we fear no longer carries such power. We have something wonderful to tell. The stone has gone away.

For Moses and the Israelites, the sign of the serpent is a symbol of healing. Christians have chosen the cross. It, too, is a sign of healing. The healing of the world.

The Catholic health care ministry, with its deep commitment to healing, is a precious and beautiful sign that God loves all of us, even into and beyond death. Let us honor our ministry and be grateful that we are a part of it.

Alleluia!

The Catholic Health Association would like to thank Jon Sarta for allowing us to use his music from the albums “The Catholic Music Project Volume V: Lent,” and “The Catholic Music Project Volume VI: Easter” for the podcast version of this reflection. His music can be obtained from mljmusic.com.