



It was before dawn and still dark on the first day of the week when the women came to the tomb. Surely they must have had some light, some torch, some lantern to guide their way.

When we are fumbling in the dark, we all need a light.

As we gather in a church transformed for our Easter celebrations, one of the things that you might notice is a new Paschal candle. It comes out for the Easter season, and at baptisms and funerals to represent our journey of faith. On it is marked a cross with the inscription of Alpha and Omega, and in it are the five nails representing the five wounds of Christ. It represents the light of Christ to illuminate our way.

When Mary and the other Mary arrived in the dark at the garden tomb on the first day of the week there was an earthquake and angels appeared like lightening. No wonder they were afraid. The

soldiers are described as becoming like “dead men.” Perhaps it is where we get the phrase “you frightened me to death.”

It is curious that in the anticipation of Christ’s birth and the news of the resurrection there are angels, messengers of God, who in both cases prompt a response of fear. Whether it was to Mary in Nazareth, to the shepherds in Judea, or to the women at the tomb, these divine messengers that come in the dark with dazzling displays of light always prompt fear. It was the same for Moses who encountered God in the burning bush and on Mount Sinai, or for the disciples who encountered the transfigured Christ on the mountain. A brilliant dazzling light that creates fear. The reply is always the same, “Do not be afraid.”

At the tomb the angels say, “Do not be afraid. He is not here. He has been raised, as he said.” As he said. You can count on his word. “Come and see where he lay, and then go and tell the others.”

And so they did. They came in and saw, and then they fled from the empty tomb with haste to go and tell the others that Jesus would appear in Galilee. It is only when they left the tomb, as they were instructed, that Jesus appears to them. It is like the story of the ten lepers. It is only when the lepers

left and were on their way to the priest, as they were instructed, that they realized they are cleansed. Here, for the women who were on their way, Jesus appears with the same words that he appeared to Mary in Nazareth, “Greetings!”

There must have been some recognition in the voice that they immediately knew who this was. And they did what any of us would do if we met our loved one who had just died a few days before: they took hold of him. They fell down, perhaps overwhelmed by exhaustion, and they held his feet. Of course they would want to hold him and never let him go.

But Jesus doesn’t allow them to stay there. Instead he directs them to do what he had always instructed those who had been healed to do. He directs them to go. “Go to tell the others,” and “Go to Galilee.”

“Go, your faith has healed you.”

“Go, your daughter is well.”

“Go to the highways and byways.”

Come and see, and then go.

Come unto me, and then go.

Come and go are some of the most frequently used imperatives in the the gospel texts.

As we come to be nourished, inspired and sustained, so we are sent, often still fumbling in the dark, but hopefully with a light. It is what following in the teaching of the apostles, the eyewitnesses to the resurrection means, that we too are a *sent* people.

In every case in the Bible there are excuses offered for reasons not to go. Moses says, “I don’t know how to speak.” Isaiah says “I am unworthy.” David says I am the last of the siblings. Mary says I am only a young girl from from the backwater of Nazareth. Thomas says I was not there. Paul says I am a murder and persecutor. There is always a good reason not to go. But God calls the ill-equipped, the one on the margin, the one most unexpected to go and offer the clarion call to life. So you have no choice but to go and be an ambassador of life in your community, to call people to another framework for seeing the world, to be the light of Christ. And as you do so, you discover that you are healed.

Alleluia! Christ is risen. And we are sent.

*Image from inside the Church of Holy Sepulchre, Jerusalem.*