

## 04/20/14 ..... Easter A

-- *Do not be afraid!* These are the first words the women hear from the angel as they come to Jesus' tomb early Sunday morning, only to find the stone rolled away and Jesus gone.

-- *Do not be afraid!* Next weekend in Rome John Paul II (along with John XXIII) will be declared a saint of the Church. This phrase was a recurring theme in his life and words. He not only said this—he lived it: confronting Communism in Eastern Europe, challenging Catholics of all ages to live their faith proudly and publicly.

-- *Do not be afraid!* This is the promise of Easter. Yet, as much as we want to believe the promise, we still have fears. That was true for the women at the tomb and the other disciples of Jesus.

-- Even after they saw the Risen Lord in the flesh, they hid from the people who caused Jesus' death. It took them a while to get the message in their hearts and heads that Jesus was indeed alive and that they were to go out and proclaim his message.

-- At Easter we don't simply celebrate an event that took place almost 2,000 years ago. We hear that God takes the initiative and seeks us out. God moves us from fear to freedom—not a freedom to do whatever our impulses drive us to want to do, but freedom to follow our best desires, those that come from God and what he calls us to be.

-- Easter calls those who have suffered from slavery to abuse, alcoholism, sickness, rejection failure at important tasks, the loss of a job, the misunderstanding of family or friends—to take heart in the Lord. Our strength is in him, not in what we can do for ourselves.

-- At Easter we celebrate with our brothers and sisters who have (are) taking the leap of faith to become a part of God's people through baptism and the Easter sacraments. Each of them (including those in our parish) has a unique story to tell of how they came to know God's love.

-- The Lord sought them out, as he pursued the women and the other disciples. The Lord seeks us out as well. He seeks us out even if we have not been to Church for some time. He seeks us out even if we are struggling with some strong sinful habit(s).

-- The Lord seeks us out like he sought those scared women and his closest followers who deserted him at the cross. They had their fears and so do we. But the Lord tells us, *Do not be not afraid!*

-- This Easter, we will not eliminate fear completely from our lives. Next week we will still have concerns about our families, our jobs, our communities and our world. But each Easter should be an opportunity to place greater trust in Jesus Christ and what he's done for us. Fear need not rule us.

-- After all, Christ rose from the dead. This wasn't just to promise us a future resurrection after we've lived our lives on earth (though we do hold to that promise).

-- It was his promise that he would be with us NOW, in our present lives. Christ will guide us through the twists and turns of our fears in this life with his promise of new life.

-- Perhaps the best way to grasp the Easter message is to hear Jesus say: *Hang in there....Know that I am with you always, until the end of the world.*

-- If we truly believe that, then despite those things in our lives which can arouse fear and trepidation, we can still hear and believe the message of the angel at the tomb: *Do not be afraid!*

-- May you, your families and loved ones, have a most blessed Easter, because Jesus Christ has overcome all your fears.