A few years ago during Holy Week, I was driving by this church out in Pennsylvania and it has this huge sign on its front lawn, kind of like the one we had outside at the corner. As I was approaching the church, I noticed the usual information that was posted on the sign. You know, the name of the church, the phone number, web site, the pastor’s name and the time of their worship service. Pretty straight forward. Nothing really special. But what caught my attention about this particular sign was that it also displayed the title of the upcoming week’s sermon. And on this particular week, it was*“Christmas was the Promise; Easter is the Proof!”* And then I paused and thought that was quite a intriguing sermon title for Easter Sunday. It does really capture what the relationship between Christmas and Easter, as well as what our Christian faith is all about?”

 Although it may seem obvious for some of us that Christmas and Easter would go hand-in-hand, but it may not be so for others. Most people can easily associate Christmas with the birth of Christ and Easter with the death AND the resurrection (or the rebirth) of Christ. But there’s more to that. That’s just the tip of the iceberg.

What began as the birth narrative of Christmas culminates as part of the re-birth narrative on Easter. This chapter of the process is completed but there is still more. God’s promise of eternal life was being fulfilled to all those who believe in Him. The rebirth (or the resurrection) of Christ is the continuation of Jesus’s birth narrative story. The resurrection is not the end, but instead the beginning of the next chapter of God’s plan for humanity. It signified that death has no final saying because Christ has conquered the consequence of OUR sins, once and for all.

 Through Christ, God the Creator reached out to us in human form of flesh and blood, because of God’s ultimate love for us. By the same token, God breathed new life into us through the suffering and the death of his only begotten son. Jesus’s miracle birth was further magnified by an even greater miracle of his death and his resurrection as we bear witness of here today.

Furthermore, this newborn King was wrapped in swaddling cloth while the resurrected King unwrapped himself and left behind the linen cloth at the place of his burial. At the time of his birth, the visitors would come to Bethlehem to pay their homage with great jubilation and expectation, while by the same token, those who arrived at the burial site outside of Jerusalem were left dejected, scattered and dispersed with mixed emotion of fear and uncertainties, not knowing what comes next. Thankfully this fear was only short-lived as the Holy Spirit granted courage and faith upon those who came. They believed what they saw (or what they didn’t see), so they may go and share the good news with others.

But wait, there’s more. **There are more stones that need to be overturned and rolled out!!!** There were more proofs and evidences that we must investigate.

 As we read earlier in the John passage, there was a lot of running back-and-forth among the disciples, many of whom were in hiding fearing for their own lives. Now that their leader was gone, they might be the next target. There were massive chaos, confusions, and uncertainties. Nobody seemed to know what was happening. Upon hearing the “Amber Alert” reported by Mary Magdalene and the other women who were with her, many thought this whole thing was a hoax (Fake News!). They wanted to do some fact-checking themselves, as they questioned the women’s credibility. So they ran. They ran as quickly as possible. The disciples demanded evidences and proofs in order to believe. Chances are you and I might’ve probably done the same thing as well, if we were there. Well, **what does this say about our own faith (or lack thereof)? What does it take for us in order to believe?**

After all the running around, many of the disciples were exhausted. To much of their disappointment, at the end they still did not find what they were looking for - the body was still missing. They were looking for the wrong proof and existenced. Perhaps this was the blessing in disguise that all they saw were some linen clothes and a rolled away stone. That was it! That was all that Jesus left behind as proofs and evidence of God’s promises of eternal life. As part of God’s plan of salvation, these linen cloths and the rolled away stone became the foundation of our faith, as long as we believe.

Of all the disciples that were mentioned in our story today, it was Mary Magdalene was the 1st who came to witness her personal faith transformation. Even though she came to the tomb at the crack of dawn while it was still dark, at the end it was Mary who was the first to have “seen the LORD” in the light. Mary came to the grave, she went in, she touched the garment, and she believed. She didn’t keep this all to herself. She went out to share this good news with others.

What about us? **What other “stones” that need to be overturned and rolled away in order for us to believe? What is preventing us from seeing God’s miracles that are already at work all around us? *Do we still believe after we have come, seen, touched and experienced God’s redemptive grace in our lives? Or are we still running and chasing around getting ourselves busy like the disciples who are searching for Jesus’s body? But he’s no longer there, He is risen! Why do we still search for the living among the dead?[[1]](#footnote-1)***

The mood on the very first Easter morning was a much more somber one than what we experience this morning, especially among the followers and disciples of Jesus. Their emotion turned from **fear** to **jubilation. Their tangible faith became a spiritual one upon their belief that Christ is no longer physically among us but he is here with us in spirit.**

**What’s left behind of the empty cross and the empty tomb served as tangible signs and proofs of our intangible faith of our risen LORD. The cross that once symbolized the cruelty of hatred and death has now become the ultimate triumphant sign of God’s humility, love and glory. The stone that symbolized the earthly death and separation between the living and the dead must roll out!**

Certainly Jesus did not need the stone to be rolled away in order to reveal himself. The rolled away stone was really more for the disciples and for us so we could get in and see for ourselves, in order for us to be convinced that indeed Christ is risen.

**The emptied tomb that liberated us and became a powerful symbol of our hope and triumph over death. It empowered us to Go and Tell others about what Christ has conquered through his resurrection and the new life that we’ve received as God’s chosen witnesses**!

In both Matthew and Mark’s accounts of the Resurrection story, they were immediately followed by Jesus’s **Great Commission**.[[2]](#footnote-2) **Both of these** **gospel writers seemed to suggest that there is a direct correlation between Christ’s resurrection and our witnesses to share what we saw and experienced of Christ with others.** In the same way, in our passage today, John suggested that this message of resurrection must be retold and shared with others. As Jesus reminded Mary, *“Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers [and sisters] and say to them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’”[[3]](#footnote-3)*

Through the Great Commission, we have been called not only to be **the Hands and the Feet of Christ, but we’ve also become the Voices, the Eyes, and the Ears in proclaiming and bearing witness to who Christ is, and what Christ has done for us, not just to ourselves but to the world.** We have been empowered by the Holy Spirit to participate in God’s mission as witnesses and ambassadors for Christ.[[4]](#footnote-4)

It is not easy for us to live out our conviction of faith. None of us were there on the first morning of resurrection, but yet we still believe in the transformative power of God through this resurrection. **The proof of God’s promises is not based on any physical evidences or tangible results, but rather it is founded upon our obedience and our faith conviction in Christ, through Christ, and with Christ, that all things may be possible.**

This episode of God’s love story, which began at the manger in the little town of Bethlehem was meant to be completed on the hills of Jerusalem on this Easter morning. **The story of LOVE lives as we bear witness to that in our HOPE and of our salvation.** The tomb was never intended to be sealed as the final resting place of the crucified Christ.

**Even though Christ had declared on the Cross that His earthly mission was now completed (finished!), OUR mission has just begun. Christ has empowered us through the Holy Spirit, to carry on this mission until Christ returns once again.**

As the prophet Isaiah declared to the Israelites that ***“we are to be God’s witnesses, servants whom God has chosen, so that we may know and believe, and understand in Him. Before God, no [other] god was formed, nor shall there be any [other] who may come after Him.[[5]](#footnote-5)***

This is what Resurrection Sunday all about. It is never about the bunnies, chocolate, the colorful eggs, the bonnets, or the spring flowers and plants. The significance of this day is much greater than these tangible signs of Easter. **We do not celebrate Easter, but we celebrate the Resurrection!!!** **It’s about what Christ has and will continue to accomplish on our behalf in conquering the death of sins. It is about reinstating God’s redeeming grace and love in a world that has been deprived of on this day. We ARE the living proof of God’s promises and witnesses to His Resurrection.**

**May God continue to challenge us and inspire us to be His Easter people living in a “Good Friday” world. May we offer FAITH to those who are in disbelief, whose lives may be in a total disarray; May we offer HOPE to those who are in despair or who are desperately in want; and May we offer LOVE to those who may feel abandoned, rejected, beaten, and lost today.**

**Christ is risen and Christ is risen indeed!** **Hallelujah.** In the name of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, Amen,

1. *Luke 24:5* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. *Matthew 28:19-20* [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. *John 20:17* [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. *II Corinthians 5:20* [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. *Isaiah 43:10* [↑](#footnote-ref-5)