

Easter Vigil
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Tonight the image of the women approaching the tomb, carrying their spices to anoint the body of Jesus, is very real to us. We know their hearts are heavy after all the events leading to Jesus betrayal, death sentence, and crucifixion. They remind us of the women and men who accompany and anoint the many people who are rejected and discarded today.

While the gospels are strangely silent about these women friends of Jesus being present at Jesus' last Passover meal, we can anticipate they were there, for they were close friends of Jesus – and Jesus was no keeper of social or religious customs or protocols that divided, ranked or separated people.

These women formed the first church in their accompanying Jesus as he walked to Golgotha. They stood with him at the foot of the cross. They saw him absorb and transform the violence leading to death rather than pass it on to others as he cried out to his Abba, "Forgive them for they know what they do." They witnessed Jesus' own desperation and final act of trust as they heard his anguished cry, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" and later his "Into your hands I commend my spirit." They, like so many heartbroken women and

men who accompany our suffering brothers and sisters at our US southern borders, witnessed the anguish of being crucified and separated from loved ones.

So when the women approached the tomb early in the morning to anoint Jesus with their spices and oils their hearts were heavy with grief. To say they were astonished when they found the tomb open –and empty – is an understatement. They, like most of us today, didn't have a clue what Jesus meant when he said he would rise and his temple would be restored. And when the women went to tell the male disciples what they had seen, the men, like today, gave no credibility to their story. They had to go see for themselves. But then, the mystery of Resurrection evades each of us until we grow into a personal and communal experience of Christ's Spirit empowering in surprising ways.

We know too well that violence abounds in the world today. People are betrayed, sold, trafficked, lured into drug addiction. Forced migration, due to economic collapse of countries, gang violence, rape, and murder escalates. Migrants, refugees, are ridiculed by some media sources and political leadership that fan the flame of fear, racism, and distorted stereotypes. Walls are erected to keep them out.

Earth herself is raped, mined, carved up; poisoned every day - and is rejected as another throwaway object, not worthy of respect.

But tonight there is a different story being told. Tonight's story is one of the power of life over death. Tonight we rejoice that the *inner life, Christ life, God's life in us*, and is stronger than death. Love is more powerful than violence. Love absorbs and neutralizes hatred. Love restores life.

Tonight we rejoice with those who have faith and moral imagination to reject violence and death. We celebrate new ways of being church as we look to the thousands of people who leave their ordinary daily lives to volunteer and care for migrants and refugees at our southern borders. We celebrate people like Kim, a Catholic Charities worker who is staying at a detention center, thousands of miles from her home, this Easter weekend so she can be present to a young detainee held in an immigration detention center.

While our official Church suffers from self-inflicted wounds due to sexual abuse, lack of accountability, transparency, and clericalism, – so much that it seems that Spirit herself has withered within it – I propose there is another church rising up, much like Jesus from the dead. This is a pastoral church showing up at our borders. This church has the moral imagination to tell a different narrative; a narrative of solidarity and loving care to those most in need.

This emerging pastoral church reminds us that the Risen Jesus, Christ, resides among those whose hearts are broken and are seeking wholeness. Christ is

sighted in young people who demand a future free from climate chaos. Christ is sighted among those who organize for societies freed of gun violence. Christ is sighted in the people who demand that all beings, and Earth, be free from the violence of poisoned waters, poisoned soil and poisoned food. Christ is sighted among those who work and pray for people to be freed from being bullied, or trafficked; or maligned because of their sexual orientation or faith tradition. Christ is sighted - right here in our midst, among our families, coworkers and friends. It is the Spirit of Christ who brings us into communion with the Holy One – and with each other.

Tonight Christ is sighted within all the people who, like the women at the tomb, enter into places of violence, death, grief and loss so as to bring their healing gifts, their herbs, spices and oils – their prayer. They – we – are the Christed Ones living in our midst today.

May we be blessed with many sightings of the Risen Christ among us in the days ahead.