

The Essence of Easter

At dawn, the women went to the tomb. There the angel says to them: "Do not be afraid. He is not here; for he has risen." They hear the words of life even as they stand before a tomb... And then they meet Jesus, the giver of all hope, who confirms the message and says: "Do not be afraid" Do not be afraid, do not yield to fear: This is the message of hope. It is addressed to us today. These are the words that God repeats. -- Pope Francis

In the Easter Gospel, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary encounter the risen Jesus, and they are told not to be afraid. This encounter changes not only their lives but of believers through the centuries that Jesus' victory over death is the cause of our rejoicing on Easter Sunday and each day of our lives.

When secular commentators teach that the Easter message is "kindness, compassion, hard work and responsibility," we as Christians recognize these traits are important and help maintain a peaceful society. However, those traits do not fully convey the essence of Easter and its ramifications for human history. What Easter means is that Jesus of Nazareth, who claimed throughout his public life to be speaking and acting in the very person of God, and who was brutally put to death by Roman executioners, rose bodily from the dead on the third day, as he foreshadowed in his earthly ministry.

To reflect on Easter is to enter an ancient Christian mystery that has provided hope and consolation for countless souls throughout the ages: that through Jesus' death on the Cross, death has been conquered and that death does not have to have the final say. And that is the revolutionary message of Easter.

Blessings,

Father Brian