



**The promise of Easter
A message from
Bishop Bruce R. Ough
Resident Bishop
Dakotas-Minnesota Area**

We will soon enter the season of Easter – a season of great rejoicing that culminates in the day of Pentecost. Easter lasts not a day or a week, but a week of weeks. So all the Sundays are named Sundays of Easter, not Sundays after Easter. We will be celebrating the presence, power and promise of Jesus’ resurrection for the next seven weeks. We are all on a journey of becoming fully alive, fully available, fully obedient Easter people.

The beginning of this journey is instructive. Being formed into an Easter person – one who sees the world through resurrection eyes – begins with Jesus’ questions to Mary Magdalene at the garden tomb: “Woman, why do you weep? Who are you looking for?” (*John 20:15*). Jesus is asking us the same questions. Why do you weep? Who are you looking for?

Mary Magdalene is the first witness to Jesus’ resurrection and the first person after the resurrection to announce the gospel to the world. However, Mary is not an Easter person when she first visits the tomb and finds it empty. She doesn’t believe Jesus has risen from the grave; she believes someone took the body away. She suspects the gardener. She is overcome with grief and stands outside the tomb weeping. But, no one has taken Jesus away. Jesus has left death behind.

When Jesus asks Mary, “Who are you looking for?” he is not chastising or ridiculing Mary. He is inviting her to faith. He is inviting her to recognize him as the Risen Lord. He is inviting her to new life. He is inviting her to fullness of life. He is inviting her to become an Easter person!

The recognition finally comes when Mary hears Jesus call her by name. In that moment, Mary abandons her grief, doubt and fear and turns to her teacher with new hope, new expectancy, new joy, new faith. She becomes an Easter person. She moves from weeping to proclaiming resurrection.

Listen! Jesus is calling you by name, as well. Jesus is calling you and me to move from weeping to believing to proclaiming.

It takes great faith and courage to believe in resurrections. It takes great hope and love to practice resurrection faith. This is particularly true in the toxic, fearful, hate-filled and divisive climate of our country and the world. These dynamics that separate us from God’s love and one another are becoming acceptable and normative. Like Mary, we are paralyzed; standing before the tomb lamenting what is lost; peering into the darkness of uncertainty and despair, unable to recognize Jesus standing in front of us.

But, the promise of Easter is that resurrection is not a one-time, long-ago event. The promise of Easter is that the Risen Christ is calling your name – my name – and inviting us to move from the ground of the dead and despairing to the place of the living and hopeful. The promise of Easter is that the risen Christ yearns to unbind us from our grave clothes and set us free to be Easter people. The promise of Easter is that the risen Christ is seeking persons to join his “stone removal” mission. The promise of Easter is that Christ’s victory is our victory.

As you prepare to celebrate the joyous victory of Easter, listen for Jesus calling you by name and embrace the journey of becoming an Easter person. As Charles Wesley famously penned: “Made like him, like him we rise; ours the cross, the grave, the skies.”

May you, your family and your congregation have a blessed Easter. Christ is risen! Christ is risen, indeed!

