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## PASTORAL LETTER – EASTER 2020

Dear friend,

Many of us may recall that Mary Magdalene was huddled at the footstool of the cross on Good Friday. She was there with Mary, the mother of Jesus, and John, known in the early church as the “Beloved Disciple.”

Mary Magdalene experienced the horror of the crucifixion and witnessed the physical death of Jesus on Good Friday. On Sunday morning, Mary Magdalene and another Mary, depending on the Gospel account that one reads, visited Jesus’s burial site in order to perform the customary Jewish rituals for a dead person. When Mary Magdalene arrived at Jesus’s burial site, Jesus’s body was not there. He had risen.

Mary Magdalene’s witness demonstrates to us that **after Friday, comes Sunday**. God is always in process. I know that many of us are experiencing the shadows, the anguish, the fear, and the pain resulting from the Coronavirus. How can we not? The rising death tolls worldwide are jarring and the images of the mass burial site on Hart Island in New York are haunting.

One cannot downplay the psychological significance of the horrific events that revolve around Coronavirus and human life, and one cannot downplay the emotional anguish revolving around the Coronavirus, such as the isolation and growing number of unemployed. Recently, I read an article where a medical anthropologist remarked that pandemics have more than a physiological impact. She went on to argue that pandemics ravage the soul of an individual and a nation. Monica Schoch-Spana, a medical anthropologist, said in a recent article in the *Washington Post* the following words: **“Pandemics aren’t just physical. They bring with them a shadow pandemic of psychological and societal injuries as well.”**

In the face of the psychological and spiritual pain created by Coronavirus, many of us are grieving the fact that we cannot physically visit a church today in order to process our pain,

fears, and concerns, and in order to celebrate the meaning of Easter and spend time with extended family and friends. But just like the clutches of death and a boulder were not able to hold Jesus back, nothing will hold God back from being there with you no matter where you are. Nothing will hold you back from living into the renewal and rebirth that comes from the power of Easter and the Resurrection story.

So, today we are given the Christian story of the Resurrection through the eyewitness of Mary Magdalene. The Resurrection story is one of hope. We are reminded in this story that God, who always is in charge, was able to turn the worst day of human history in the crucifixion of the Christ into the greatest day in history. Simply stated, **Easter follows Good Friday**. Christ arose from the grave on Sunday. God was in control. God remains in control. That is all we need to know. We need to trust in God's timing, that indeed all things work together for good to those who love God.

So, please join me this morning in celebrating Easter through a wonderful video devotional led by our congregants and staff members <https://youtu.be/McKu8e2tLgA>

Also, if you wish to have an academic perspective on the significance of the Resurrection, please view the lecture delivered by Dr. Chilton on our website: <https://www.rhinebeckreformed.org/learning>. The Resurrection lecture/video will be forthcoming.

Lastly, I would like to share another spiritual resource for Easter celebration that comes from where our fellow congregant, Eleanor Williamson, worships in the south, [orcchapel.org](http://orcchapel.org). The guest speaker is **Rear Admiral Barry C. Black (Ret.)**, who is the 62nd Chaplain of the United States Senate.

Have a blessed Easter!

Your brother-in-Christ, your friend, and your pastor,  
Pastor Luis