

Preaching To [and Through] the Choir

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There's an expression that describes a dilemma that we ministers face on a regular basis: "Preaching to the choir." "Preaching to the choir" means advocating for a cause, to a group of people who are already convinced of the importance of that cause. It's proclaiming a message to people who regularly proclaim that same message themselves - often in a more elevated way than those who are preaching to them! So on this Easter morning, I'm not preaching to the choir; I'm preaching *through* the choir. Realistically, I have little choice.

The message of Easter is far too grand and glorious to be expressed or captured in mere words. It takes music and flowers, color and candles, Bread and Cup, community and celebration just to scratch the surface of what Easter entails. That's because Easter isn't simply a one-day or one-time event. It's an amazing, on-going phenomenon that can lift our spirits and touch our hearts like a stirring symphony or a deeply moving song.

The heart of the Easter message, is that the Divine love and grace embodied in Jesus can not be restricted or restrained! It's been tried before, and will be tried again, but it will not succeed. In spite of being nailed to a cross, regardless of guards and the heavy stone sealing his tomb, Jesus Christ continues to rise-up and live. And just as Jesus refuses to let the abundance of Divine Love be curtailed or constricted, so Divine Love refuses to let Jesus be confined to a tomb or conquered by death. That's what makes preaching the Easter Message - and witnessing to our Faith - both exciting and challenging.

It's exciting because we proclaim the *Risen* Christ - One who was dead and buried, yet is now alive and active in and among you

and me. That's also the *challenging* part - because we're not talking about a lifeless commodity! To have faith in the Living Christ means that our faith itself must be living and active, growing and evolving. It's not something that can be frozen in time, or reduced to a simple sermon or statement of belief. Jesus Christ is far too vibrant to be encased in stained-glass; far too complex to be reduced to a collection of spiritual platitudes; far too wonderful to be explained or proclaimed through words alone.

In and through the Life, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus, our Divine Source proclaims and displays an unstoppable love - one that will always find a way to break-through the barriers that people try to impose. It's a love that reaches-out to society's outcast and oppressed, most poor and vulnerable; a love that doesn't stop, even when threatened by powerful and dangerous religious and political authorities. It's a love that takes on the brutal pain of rejection, suffering, and even death itself; yet it's a love which will not die!

This is why the Easter story is central to our Faith: because it provides us the insight and the inspiration for dealing with Life's most difficult challenges and struggles, pain and loss. It shows us how you and I, like Jesus, can boldly approach Life in a way that is gracious and liberating, joyful and compassionate! The story of Easter *is* the heart and soul of our Faith. And while, at times, it may sound too good to be true, nevertheless it reveals the greatest Truth ever told. It's the story of Good ultimately triumphing over evil; the story of the Creator's never-ending, redeeming love for all of creation. It's the story of how ordinary people like you and me, when infused with Divine Love and Grace, can overcome our doubts and fears, and do extraordinary things.

So perhaps the most remarkable thing about the Easter story is that when you and I truly believe it and trust it, share it and *live* it,

it becomes the authentic story of our own lives! A story, that by its very nature, inspires us all - like the choir - to sing-out with joy and thanksgiving!