

The Congregation of Saint Athanasius  
A sermon preached by Father Bradford on Easter Day  
April 5, 2015

+

At no time is it more instructive to compare the Four Gospels than in their accounts of Easter morning. We so easily accept that there were angels at the tomb announcing the Resurrection of Christ, when in point of fact only Saint Matthew's gospel tells us a *single* angel was present. In Saint Luke's account there are two figures at the grave but they are described as *men*. That is because angels are messengers and do not ask questions. *Saint Luke's men asked questions*. They said, "Why do you seek the living among the dead?" A more modern way of asking that question is, "Is there any room in you for good news?"

On Easter morning Mary Magdalene and the apostles certainly were focused on the bad news. The crucifixion had devastated their capacity to believe any goodness remained in the world. When they came to the tomb at dawn they were focused on the dead. They came to carry out one last task and act of devotion to their dead Master. The question the men at the tomb asked was right on the money. "Why do you seek the living among the dead?" Is there any room in you for good news?

It is an appropriate question for contemporary Christians as well. We are not immune to being dragged down by the worldview and by world events. Like Mary Magdalene and the others our own hearts can be burdened with fear about what is to come and what is to become of us. Just ask our co-religionists in places like Syria and Kenya, many of whom are spending their last earthly moments facing the business end of an AK-47. Our era is already noted for the beginning of a new wave of violence on Christian believers. But like the followers of Jesus on that first Easter morning, when fear is the engine that drives us we cannot be the bearers of the Good News.

Our world focuses on the bad. And there is plenty of it! We all learn to cope with bad news and react to it. What about the good news? The report of Mary Magdalene and her companions would have easily been believed had they reported a defiled grave and missing body. That is what they in fact *did* report initially, according to Saint John's Gospel. Peter and John went off to see what could be done. But these women later carried back to Peter and the rest *another* message. It was the most significant piece of information the world has ever been given. But Scripture records no account of the apostles rushing off to see the Risen Lord!

The Congregation of Saint Athanasius  
A sermon preached by Father Bradford on Easter Day  
April 5, 2015

+

Rather, the reaction must have been, “Christ is Risen?” Question mark. And maybe they used words like *wishful thinking* or, a bit less kindly, *delusion*, or even *crazy*! No one can accuse the Lord’s followers of being gullible!

The world is a very different place because of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. The job description of Christians is to focus on the good news about that difference. Life is imperishable. It changes but it does not die. Jesus showed us many things. And the most decisive and life-changing thing is the true relationship of death to life, and the preciousness of that life.

It was night when Christ rose from the dead. Nobody saw it. But the first messengers had to say to the Lord’s closest followers, “Are you ready for good news?” Before or after the Resurrection Christ never made fun of people’s suffering and doubt. He never said, “Snap out of it.” That wasn’t what was being said by the two men at the tomb either. What the Lord *did* do was consistently point to life and He showed us the way we should go. His message for the Great Fifty Days had a constant theme: “*Do not be afraid.*” “*Peace be with you.*”

The bad news will always be around us. Christians of all people should not be surprised or taken in by it, or that the world and those opposed to the Christian Faith hate us. But neither should we be overcome by the bad news. The Risen Christ has overcome the world. *All of it*. The events of Easter morning told Mary Magdalene and all the rest of us that bad news is not the real story after all. The real story is “Christ is Risen!”