

Happy Easter! Easter brings a renewed Hope to our world. The day of Christ's resurrection may be the most hopeful day on record. It was the day that we learned that the Gospel of Jesus was true. The day our Savior proved his divine nature by rising from the dead. The day mankind confirmed that, "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life." The day our access to the kingdom of God through repentance and forgiveness was made real.

But in the midst of this Easter revelation, an eyewitness of the event gives us insight into the mechanics of Easter hope. Like each of us, he had moments when he stumbled as a follower of Christ on earth. His name was Peter.

Let's not think of Peter, in this case, as the rock of our Church or our first pope, but as one of us, prone to weakness and imperfect in his ways. Picture Peter as a burly, headstrong man of the sea, a fisherman. The night before the crucifixion, Peter defends Jesus in the garden by cutting off a man's ear with a sword, but then, a few hours later, he openly denies the Messiah, three times. At the time of this gospel passage, Peter has spent the whole weekend heartbroken over the betrayal of his master and Lord. Peter falls, but let's look at how he gets back up again.

We hear in today's gospel that Mary Magdalene suddenly runs to the upper room and reports that Jesus's body has been taken from the tomb. The apostles are hiding, for fear of the Jews, but Peter springs into action and starts running to the tomb with John. You can imagine the big muscular man, sprinting with the other disciple running to find his Savior.

This is a time of hope for Peter, hoping for an escape from the misery and shame that he is holding inside. Perhaps, he's running to the tomb to make up for not protecting Jesus a few days earlier and hoping he can find Christ's body, to hold a proper burial.

In any case, when Peter arrives at the tomb, John respectfully waits for Peter to be first to go inside. This is an emotionally charged moment, entering the darkness of this place of death. The body of Jesus would have been in the tomb for up to 3 days, and even if it was taken out, the place where he laid would be messy and unpleasant. But, Peter, though caught in his tangle of emotions of shame, fear, and hope, takes his brokenness into that mess, as he seeks reconciliation with his God. THIS is the Rock of our Church, leading us in our Christian lives, full of brokenness that only Jesus can fix.

Peter enters the tomb expecting a mess, and he instead finds an orderly, clean tomb, with the burial clothes folded and the headcloth set aside. This goes beyond all his hopes, as he begins to see a glimmer of redemption, not only for him, but for all of mankind. The empty tomb means Jesus may be alive, and if He is, then Peter may have a chance to ask for forgiveness. Reconciliation can seem messy, but Jesus heals the messiness and gives us a new start.

It turns out, this is what Peter experienced. In the evening of that same day, when Jesus appears to Peter and the other disciples and says, "Peace be with you." This is the peace Peter longed for, the redemption that only Christ and his cross can give. Redemption that is always given freely. This is the hope of Easter. It's a pattern for all of us to follow in our lives. To know when we've fallen, to make an effort to get back up, and to seek redemption by running to our savior with open hearts and asking for his pardon.

This is the hope of knowing that no matter how messy life gets, we always have Jesus to lift us up, out of our brokenness. And then we can do what St. Paul says in his letter to the Colossians, "If then you were raised with Christ, seek what is above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God." As long as we seek what is above, we will find our peace in Christ.

Beginning with the resurrection, Christ continues his mission of saving our souls through His Holy Spirit while he intercedes for us with His Father. Jesus's resurrection allows Him to become our mediator with God. The Catechism of the Catholic Church says, "The cross is the unique sacrifice of Christ, the one mediator between God and men. In his incarnate divine person, he has in some way united himself to every man." In the resurrection, Jesus offers each of us a personalized path to heaven.

In the gospel of John, Thomas asks Jesus, "Master, we do not know where you are going; how can we know the way?" Jesus replies, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." (see John 14:6). Each Easter we celebrate the resurrection that opens the door to eternal life.

In his December 2024 video announcing the Jubilee Year of Hope, Pope Francis said, "Christian hope is a gift from God that fills our lives with joy." The gospel of Jesus Christ is real, and Easter offers all of us hope for both in this world and the next. Pope Francis finishes the video with these words. "Don't forget—hope never disappoints" (see Rom. 5:5). Happy Easter!