

A man was blissfully driving along the highway,
when the Easter Bunny jumped out in front of him.
Boom...the bunny went down, eggs flying everywhere.
The driver, being a sensitive man as well as an animal lover,
pulled off the road, and got out to see what had become of the Bunny.
Much to his dismay, the Bunny was dead.
The driver felt guilty and began to cry.
A woman driving down the same highway
saw the man crying on the side of the road and pulled over.
She stepped out of her car and asked the man what was wrong.
"I feel terrible," he explained,
"I accidentally hit the Easter Bunny and killed it.
There may not be an Easter because of me. What should I do?"
The woman told the man not to worry. She knew exactly what to do.
She went to her car trunk, and pulled out a spray can.
She walked over to the limp, dead Bunny,
and sprayed the entire contents of the can onto the little furry animal.
Miraculously the Easter Bunny came to back life, jumped up,
picked up the spilled eggs and candy,
waved its paw at the two humans and hopped on down the road.
The man was astonished. He said to the woman,
"What in the world did you spray on him?"
The woman turned the can around so that the man could read the label.
It said: "Hair spray. Restores life to dead hair."

And with that, on behalf of the entire pastoral team,
I wish a happy and blessed Easter to all of you.

Today we begin the Easter Season—
fifty days of celebrating the resurrection of the Lord.
We dress in our finest...we visit with family...we eat too much candy.
However, our sensibilities tell us
that Easter is about much more than that.

Craig Barnes, writing in the magazine *Christian Century*, penned this:

"Earlier this week, an old couple received a phone call
from their son who lives far away.

The son said he was sorry,

but he wouldn't be able to come for a visit over the holidays after all.

"The grandkids say hello." He told them.

They assured him that they understood,

but when they hung up the phone they didn't dare look at each other.

Earlier this week, a woman was called into her supervisor's office

to hear that times are hard for the company and they had to let her go.

"So sorry." Her boss said.

She cleaned out her desk, packed away her hopes for getting ahead,

and wondered what she would tell her kids.

Earlier this week, someone received terrible news from a physician.

Someone else heard the words, 'I don't love you any more.'

Earlier this week, someone's hope was crucified.

And the darkness is overwhelming."

And then he writes this:

"No one is ever ready to encounter Easter until he or she

has spent time in the dark place where hope cannot be seen.

Easter is the last thing we are expecting. And that is why it terrifies us.

This day is not about bunnies, springtime and girls in cute new dresses.
It's about more hope than we can handle."

This day is not about bunnies, springtime and girls in cute new dresses.

It's about more hope than we can handle.

I like that description of Easter,

because Easter is about more hope than we can handle.

When we think about Good Friday,

We are invited to connect that event 2000 years ago

with Good Fridays of our own: A serious illness, an addiction,

a broken relationship, the death of a loved one.

Well today I am here to tell you that none of those stories are the end.
Today I am here to tell you that we have a reason for our hope.
And it is found in an empty tomb.

I want to share with you a personal story of Easter.

It was the Easter of 2005
That year I got a call from home right after the Easter vigil Mass,
And I was told I needed to get home that my mom was dying.
I drove to Indianapolis arriving just in time to see my mom
take her final breaths.

I made the decision to come back
and celebrate Easter Sunday with my parish in Jeffersonville.
Several people thanked me for doing that,
But I have a confession to make.
I really didn't do it for them. I did it for me.

You see, I needed to know that day,
when the darkness was more than I could handle,
that the tomb was empty.
I needed to know that day that Jesus Christ IS risen today!
I needed to hear the Alleluias...I needed to see the lilies.
I had to know the power of the resurrection.

It's interesting that the women
and the apostles did not know what to make of the empty tomb.
"Someone has taken the body." They assumed.
It took some time for the power of the resurrection to be made clear to them.
And the same is true for us.

When we experience the depths of pain
caused by any number of Good Friday events,
it takes a while before we can see the light of the resurrection.
It takes a while to know the power of the empty tomb.

And the understanding of that power,
The grasping of the miracle comes most often, I think,
through the touch and prayer and hope of the community of believers

When my mother died, I felt that power in the days and weeks that followed.

When my father died just 2 months later,

I felt that power as so many people were there to support me.

They lift me up when I doubted; they strengthened me when I was weak.

My friends,

the power of the resurrection comes when we make it real in our lives.

The power of the resurrection comes when we offer words of hope

to the friend who has no hope, to the friend in the midst of pain.

I think in many ways we become Easter for one another.

We become the risen Christ, present in this world.

May you have that experience this day and in the days to come

through the loving embrace of this faith family.

Please God, let it be so...for each of us and for all of us.