

THE JOY OF EASTER

In the Fourth Gospel, these words are recorded:

So now you are in anguish. But I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy away from you. [Jn. 16:22] But how can we really enter into that joy, knowing the sorrow, pain, disappointment, loss we too often experience?

It's all about openness to transformation. We'll never see the risen Christ if we don't look inside the tomb (to find it empty); we won't figure out that the stone is rolled back if we don't look up; we won't venture to the tomb at all if, in spite of our sadness, love doesn't take hold of us. But when love does take hold, all kinds of visions are possible...

When love takes hold of us (when Love takes hold of us), we realize that while death is real, it is not final. We understand (in the words of the Song of Songs 8:6 that love is stronger than death (or, as Mitch Albom put it, *Life has to end. Love doesn't*). And we are enabled to have faith that our destiny is wrapped in the love of Jesus Christ for us: the One who died and rose again, who left us an empty tomb and a vision, who changed the apostles forever (indeed, *making* them Apostles).

When Peter and the Beloved Disciple ran to the tomb [John 20], it was the Beloved Disciple who "saw and believed." Why? It was because he knew himself (more than the others knew themselves) to be beloved. All were beloved: he knew it more deeply. And so his vision was transformed first.

Is there any blessing more transformative than knowing (experientially knowing) that we are loved by One that matters? This is how we taste the promise of our own resurrection in Christ. Hear the words: "He is risen as He said." More importantly, hear the words: "I love you."