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Easter 2005

“Jesus said to her (Mary of Magdala), “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?” (Jn 20:15)

To all the clergy, seminarians and faithful of the Diocese of Arizona: peace, joy and our apostolic blessing.

Once again, the Church celebrates with joy the Resurrection of Our Lord, Jesus Christ. For the past six weeks we have journeyed more intimately with him. We have examined our lives to see how closely they conform to the example he gave us and, through our Lenten disciplines; we have resolved to amend our lives so that we may live more authentically as his disciples.

On Holy Thursday we sat at table with him as he washed his disciples’ feet and wondered what kind of teacher is this, that he would become the servant of his followers. We puzzled over his words as he took bread and told us it was his body; as he took wine and told us it was his blood, and then told us to eat and drink it and to do this in his memory.

On Good Friday, we stood in disbelief and horror as we saw him beaten and mocked, unjustly condemned to death, and then ignominiously nailed to a cross. We watched as the sky darkened and the earth quaked as he gave up his spirit and, as he died, part of us died. We left Calvary saddened, lost, in deep sorrow, wondering what kind of teacher is this, that he would allow all this to happen to him when we knew that with one simple request to his heavenly Father, none of this would have occurred.

On Holy Saturday, we locked ourselves away, stunned, frightened or numbed by the events of the previous days. In disbelief we relived over and over those heady days when we felt his loving presence so strongly, when we felt that the Kingdom of God had finally come and then that day of horror when it all seemed to come crashing down around us. Feeling lost and alone, we hid, fearful for our own safety,

wondering if we would be subject to the same horrific ordeal, wondering what kind of teacher is this, that he would abandon us to our worst fears.

And then on Sunday morning, the strange news that his tomb was empty. The women who had gone to anoint his body claimed that his body was gone and we wondered what had become of it. Had it been carried away by the soldiers? Where had they taken it? Why? But then we remembered what he had told us and we wondered if it could be true. Was it possible that he had been raised from the dead as he foretold? How could that be? And we wondered what kind of teacher was this, that even death could not stop him?

And then the stories started coming from our friends who had also followed this teacher, Jesus. He had appeared in different places and had been seen eating and drinking with his followers, just as he had before. But not quite, there was something different about him, something that made it sometimes difficult for people to recognize him as easily as they had before. And we remembered what Mary of Magdala told us, how even she, his closest disciple, had trouble recognizing him when he appeared to her at the tomb; how she thought he was the gardener, and how it wasn't until he called her by name that she recognized him for who he really was. And again we wondered, what kind of teacher was this, that he could appear as anyone and not be recognized for who he really is.

Nearly two thousand years have gone by since that Sunday morning when Mary of Magdala failed to recognize him until he called her name. Every day since that time, Christ, the Teacher, continues to appear to us and call us by name. Christ comes to us in the face of the poor and the hungry, in the face of the victims of war and oppression, in the face of the victims of discrimination and prejudice. Every day he calls us by name, but what kind of disciples are we that, unlike Mary of Magdala, we too often fail to hear their voice as his voice and to see their face as his face. We continue looking for him, if we even look at all, in the comfort zone of people who look like us, act like us, who don't disturb our delicate sensibilities. We want to follow Jesus as long as it's not upsetting or inconvenient.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, every day each of us has the opportunity to meet this teacher, Jesus. Every day he appears to us in the person of one another, in those unknown to us as well as those known to us. Every day we hear his voice calling us, asking us to recognize him in all humanity and to follow his example of selfless service. The Resurrected Christ lives on in each and every one of us, as each and every one of us. Like him, we must take the ordinary events of the world and transform them into an encounter with the living Christ, just as he took bread and wine and transformed them into an encounter with his own body and blood. Every day, we must die to self-centeredness and a way of life that says, "what's in it for me?" and be resurrected instead to a life of compassionate, selfless service.

As we celebrate Jesus' resurrection and we recall our baptism by which we entered into his life, let us attune our ears that we may hear his voice more clearly in every

voice and adjust our vision that we may see him more clearly in every face. Recognizing Christ in all that surrounds us, let us respond to the events of our lives with the same love and compassion with which Jesus always responded to the events in his life. Then, and only then, will the kingdom of God be firmly established on the earth.

On the joyful occasion of the commemoration of Christ's resurrection, I extend to you all my sincere wishes for a blessed Easter.

In his peace and love,

Most Rev. Mark Elliott Newman, OC