

Readings celebrating the elements - Earth, Air, Fire, Water
Sung Psalm Response: Let all the earth cry out, cry out to God with joy! [2x]
Romans 6:3-11
Luke 24:1-10

Roll Away the Stone!
April 3, 2010 Easter Vigil

Jane Via

We gather this holy night in an interlude of Joy! We take a respite from the harsh realities of life. We do this in community. As a community of faith, we celebrate our experience of, affirm our trust in, the Good News: life transcends death.

Like the disciples, we don't understand exactly *how* this good news affects our sense of profound loss, our awareness of injustice, our intuitive perception of chaos and evil just below the fragile surface of civilization. We only know that this story about Jesus' resurrection, so central to our faith, extends beyond the experience of Jesus as an individual, beyond the initial revelation that the stone has been rolled away. We only know that this good news changes everything! The disciples' experience of Jesus' resurrection affirms everything about Jesus' life that was authentic and radical. Resurrection doesn't eliminate tragedy, agony, suffering or death; but resurrection changes how we live through those inevitable experiences. Resurrection changes everything!

But resurrection isn't over. It goes on. We participate in it each day, each time, we affirm our experience and trust that life transcends death. We participate in resurrection as church when we explore, as the first disciples did, what the good news means for us and our world.

So tonight, like the women who followed Jesus, we stand at his tomb which, over the millennia, has become the tomb of the church. We know the stone must be rolled away. Like the women approaching Jesus' tomb at early dawn, we fear we aren't big enough, strong enough, to move the enormous stone blocking the entrance to the tomb, holding back the exodus of new life; but like the women, we discover in amazement, over and over again, the movement of the Spirit can, and does, roll away the stone.

We participate in rolling away the stone. Rather than tending the often lifeless body of the church with spices and ointments, we engage the struggle. We do what we can to revive the church and release the glory of God into the world.

We roll away the stone of monarchical leadership. We roll away the stone of infallibility. We roll away the stone of canon law. We roll away the stone of sexism. We roll away the stone of male domination. We roll away the stone of clericalism. We roll away the stone of power disguised in the robe of piety. We roll away the stone of anti-

intellectualism. We roll away the stone of dualism as the philosophical foundation of Christian faith. We roll away the stone the orthodoxy which stifles the Spirit. We roll away the stone of inflexible, unchanging doctrine. We roll away the stone of exclusion. We roll away the stone that separates personal morality from corporate and political morality. We roll away the stone of separation between the church and the world. We let out the stale, lifeless air of the tomb.

We breathe in. We breathe in the fresh air of collaborative community, the fresh air of a discipleship of equals in the community called “church.” We breathe in the fresh air of the law of love. We breathe in the fresh air of gender balance, mutual respect and cooperation. We breathe in the fresh air of spiritual authenticity. We breathe in the fresh air of mutual responsibility, whatever our role in faith community. We breathe in the fresh air of doctrinal pluralism, curiosity, openness and change. We breathe in the fresh air of a multifaceted inclusion, of common humanity with all peoples, of respect for “the multiple revelations of God found in all the wisdoms of the world.”¹ We breathe in the fresh air of service beyond the church in the world at large. We breathe in the fresh air of consistency of values in all areas of life. We breathe in the fresh air which is the Holy Spirit, “the divinity that infuses life with the sacred.”²

We breathe in resurrection. We breathe in new life. We breathe deeply. We fill our lungs with hope. We breathe in the joy of life which transcends death, a joy so full we can’t help but laugh out loud!

It’s what we do in this extraordinary faith community. It’s why it’s so fitting we call ourselves the community of Mary Magdalene, the apostle of Resurrection. We witness to, and participate in, rolling away the stone.

Roll away the stone!! See the glory of God! Roll away the stone! Be the glory of God! It’s the work of a lifetime. It’s the work of Resurrection!

¹ The Creed, by Joan Chittiser.

² Ibid.