

Alleluia! Christ is risen!
The Lord is risen indeed! Alleluia!

A friend from high school posted this on Facebook on Thursday:

Happy Opening Day, the ultimate clean slate.
Hope springs eternal and all that jazz.
It happens every spring, and it never gets old.
Go Phils!¹

I have to admit that it took my brain a minute to process what he wrote. Maybe it's because it was Maundy Thursday and I was sinking deep into the Holy Week walk of Jesus's last days – but my first thought was that he was talking about Easter.

I mean “opening day” – like the open tomb! And a clean slate – hope springs eternal – it happens every spring and never gets old! Am I right?

Then I read the “Go Phils!” part again and it clicked. Oh yes, Thursday was not only Holy Thursday, it was Opening Day for Major League Baseball – that other American religion. And speaking as a lifelong Cubs fan, I realized yes, as Phillies fan he'll need all the hope he can get – but hope does indeed spring eternal.

¹ Jay Valter ☺ !

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It is this hope that is the essential element of life, for it can carry us through our darkest times.

Hope must have been buried deep in Mary Magdalene that first Easter. She approached the tomb while it was still dark, not to anoint or tend Christ's body as we are told in other Gospel accounts, but because she simply needed to be near her friend and teacher.

It was her enduring love that brought her there to find the stone rolled away, and then led to John's tale of the disciples' footrace, the empty tomb, and believing but not understanding.

Believing but not understanding is actually a great description of hope.

For Peter and the beloved disciple, this believing something important was happening, but not understanding what it was, or what it meant, led them back to their homes – back to safety.

But Mary stayed. Her hope, buried deep in her earlier walk in the dark, was working its way to the surface. In her confusion, fear, anger, and sorrow she wept. But she stayed.

And because she stayed she encountered messengers from God – and then Jesus himself, who called her by name.

Her hope burst open like a ripe pomegranate and became something more when she encountered the resurrected Christ, because she learned a deep truth. As theologian Frederick Buechner puts it: **Resurrection means the worst thing is never the last thing.**

This is God's promise to God's people – the worst thing is never the last thing.

This is what we celebrate on Easter – and every day in between. This is why we put our hope in God. And this is why we celebrate the sacrament of baptism.

Today we will baptize Alex and Juliana. Baptism is an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace – a symbol of our hope in God’s promise.

As we pray over the water in the font we will say these words:

We thank you, Father, for the water of Baptism.

In it we are buried with Christ in his death.

By it we share in his resurrection.

Through it we are reborn by the Holy Spirit.

And then we will splash them with water, mark them with chrism, and give them the light of Christ to carry into the world – that they may shine as beacons of hope for all to see.

This is my hope this Easter. That on this “opening day” hope springs eternal – and we may all live resurrection lives, offering God’s promise to everyone we meet.

For –

Alleluia! Christ is risen!

The Lord is risen indeed! Alleluia!

~ AMEN ~