

*CRIBB<S>NOTE – April 19, 2009*

The celebration of Easter is not over! In fact, in the Orthodox Christian tradition today is Easter Sunday. Yes, we are in the midst of the Easter Season. There is good news for the world. God's love cannot be extinguished. Calendars cannot limit the amount of time we share in the joy of Resurrection. New life is extended to all of us.

As we reflect on the events that sent the followers of Jesus behind locked doors and kept them there in a state of fear and despair, we recognize ourselves huddled with them. Two millennia later, many Christians are still afraid; too scared to walk through the streets proclaiming Good News of God's love. Many Christians are afraid to live authentic life based on our faith in Jesus Christ. When we consider the state of shock that trapped Jesus' disciples in a house for at least week after his Resurrection, we realize many of us are shut up behind closed doors as well.

Fear will silence the voices of the faith community. We can become mute and not speak out about the conditions that threaten peace in the world. But, more than mere words are required in times like these. Two wars continue to rage more than six years after they began. A wake of more than 4,000 American bodies lie in the path of destruction and untold numbers of Iraqi, Pakistani, and Afghani peoples are dead, displaced, and live with despair. Many in the faith community have not spoken up because of fear, confusion, or lack of knowing what to say or do.

Families and individuals across America are scared because they have lost their jobs, homes, and pensions. They have watched their savings dwindle and their hopes for better days have dissipated. Corruption, neglect, greed, and avarice have overwhelmed the once strong and proud. Many people of faith have become spectators standing on the sidelines of human brokenness.

Into the fray of personal and global events Jesus stands among us. He who had been murdered in a public execution returned to life. Those followers who denied and betrayed him experienced the amazing presence of their leader. Jesus came back with a clear and simple word: "Peace!"

There was no condemnation or recrimination. Jesus did not bring harsh judgment or accusations. Jesus returned with a spirit of mercy, forgiveness, and understanding. He breathed on his disciples the Spirit of Peace.

It is that same peace given to us. Peace that brings unity and bolsters the souls of those of us who don't fully understand the power of God's grace.

During this Easter Season, we are reminded of the reason Jesus was born and how he died. We return to the moment when three women witnessed his living presence and were struck with terror and awe. It was an unbelievable encounter that continues to inspire and elevate us.

The marks of faith are demonstrated everyday in the mundane and dramatic activities that bring people closer together. During times when we have an absolute sense of vulnerability and we know only God can get us through, our faith becomes most pronounced. We move from fear to resolution. We humbly submit our lives to God and offer ourselves as part of a faith community united by love and forgiveness. We say to each other in the words Jesus greeted his community, "Shalom! As-salaam-alaikum! Peace be upon you."