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Holy Faith, Santa Fe  
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Easter Day  
Acts 10.34-43  
Psalm 118.1-2, 14-24  
Colossians 3.1-4  
Matthew 28.1-10

In the name of the one, true, and living God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Have you ever experienced an earthquake? If there are any Californians here today, I'm sure you've experienced an earthquake. On my first trip to California, I felt my first earthquake. Even though it wasn't very strong, it was still disconcerting. Out of nowhere, the ground begins to roll and you lose all sense of security. I remember the great earthquake that struck Washington, D.C. in 2011 that caused the National Cathedral's gargoyles and finials to topple and its great central tower, still obscured by scaffolding 15 years later, to break. About two miles away, I was in my parish office, a glass-enclosed sunroom of the former rectory. All of a sudden, the earth began to shake and the windows began to bow. It was terrifying! Blessedly, I had the wherewithal to realize what was happening and to stand in the threshold to my office in case of any break in the ceiling or shattered glass. The shaking and rolling seemed to go on for an eternity, although it only lasted probably 30 seconds.

Well, the first Easter began with an earthquake! There was a great earthquake caused by an angel of the Lord descending from heaven, rolling the stone away from the tomb where Jesus was buried, and then sitting on it. The previous earthquake occurred only three days earlier, as Jesus died on the cross. At that moment, the earth shook and rocks were split. When the Roman centurion and those with him, who were

watching Jesus die on the cross, felt the earthquake and saw what took place, they were terrified and said of Jesus, “Truly this man was God’s Son.”

On that first Easter morning, the Roman soldiers who were guarding Jesus’ tomb were terrified by the earthquake and the appearance of the angel, and became like dead men. But the women who had come to Jesus’ tomb weren’t so terrified. Perhaps they remembered what Jesus had said – that he would be betrayed into human hands, they would kill him, and on the third day he would be raised. Mary Magdalene and the other Mary, the mother of James and Joseph, had watched Jesus, from a distance, die on the cross, had seen the great stone rolled to seal Jesus’ tomb, and had come to the tomb that first Easter morning. While Jesus’ brothers were named James and Joseph (cf. Matthew 13.55), the other Mary was probably not Jesus’ mother because she would have been so named, so the identity of this Mary is unknown. This leaves room for us to enter the Easter story. We can be that other Mary. What would our reaction be to the earthquake and the appearance of the angel? Would we remember what Jesus said?

The angel, though, did say to the women, “Do not be afraid.” He told them that Jesus, whom they were looking for, was not there because he had been raised from the dead. The angel showed the women where Jesus had lain and told them to tell the disciples that Jesus had been raised from the dead and they should go to Galilee to see him. Leaving the tomb quickly with fear and great joy, the women ran into Jesus who greeted them. Jesus also said to them, “Do not be afraid,” and told them to tell the disciples to go to Galilee to see him.

Earthquakes seem to follow Jesus wherever he is – at his death and at his resurrection. Earlier, in response to the disciples’ question about the sign of Jesus’

coming and the end of the age, Jesus predicted earthquakes. He said, “[Y]ou will hear of wars and rumors of wars; [do not be afraid]; for this must take place, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places; all this is but the beginning of the birth pangs” (Matthew 24.3-8) – the birth pangs of a new world order, not a new political world order, but a new world order governed under the reign of Jesus Christ. This new world order was ushered in by Jesus’ resurrection. It may not seem like it, given our current world situation of wars and rumor of wars, nation rising against nation, kingdom against kingdom, famines and earthquakes in various places. But this is a continuation of the birth pangs of a new world order governed under the reign of Jesus Christ. Just imagine how worse the world would be without Jesus’ birth, life, death, and resurrection.

At Jesus’ birth, God took human form and broke into this world to save this world. Let God through Jesus’ resurrection break into your life to save you from the pain and suffering, the evil and death of this world. For that’s what Jesus did by his death and resurrection – he took upon himself the sin of the world and triumphed over all pain and suffering, all evil and death.

As a result, we have nothing to fear. Remember the words of Jesus to his disciples about the end of the age: “Do not be afraid.” Remember the words of the angel to the women that first Easter morning: “Do not be afraid.” Remember the words of Jesus to the women that first Easter morning: “Do not be afraid.” Embrace the words the risen Christ says to you this Easter morning: “Do not be afraid.” When you next experience an earthquake, do not be afraid; it may be God breaking into your life.

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