

Not exactly an Easter sermon

By [Diane Roth](#)

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We pull out all the stops on Easter. So do you, I'll bet. We have the flowers, and the music, and the crowds. This year we had an incredible liturgical dancer who carried the paschal candle throughout the sanctuary. The Easter sermon was clear and dramatic and inspiring.

We pull out all the stops on Easter Sunday. Let me be clear. I'm not against this. Not at all.

But may I say? I have often noticed that the Easter gospel itself is slightly less clear, a little more fuzzy, more ambiguous. Take Mark, for example. The tomb is empty. "He is not here. He has risen." But Jesus does not appear. And the women run away, and don't say anything to anyone. Or Luke's story. Again, Jesus does not appear. The angels tell the story, and the women believe it this time (that's a relief, anyway), but the disciples think the women are stark raving mad.

No trumpets. No singing. Just an empty tomb, a message, and some questions.

This Sunday, the crowds are somewhat diminished, and the questions continue. But at least Jesus appears, walks through the locked doors and the haze and the ambiguity to say to the frightened disciples, "Peace be with you."

Seeing Jesus isn't exactly a relief, not exactly. It raises as many questions as it answers. It complicates things. For one thing, Jesus expects them to go out. "As the Father has sent me, so I send you," he says. And they must be thinking, "wait... as the Father sent you....but what happened to you?"

So you have to wonder exactly what Jesus meant when he said, "peace be with you." I'm pretty sure that he didn't mean, "have a nice day." I'm not even sure that he was talking about World Peace, although I'm pretty sure that Jesus would be for World Peace. No, this has to be a strange sort of peace, a sort-of "peace with questions." It's the peace of the empty tomb, the peace of nail-scarred hands, the

peace of "Surely God was in this place, and I did not know it."

We don't resemble Jesus, not much anyway. I don't know how it is that he expects us to go out in his name, bearing his peace, bearing his life, crucified and risen. I think he's stark raving crazy sometimes.

So Sunday I'll go to church, like Thomas, and I'll be muttering a little under my breath, looking for Jesus to show up, with his wounded hands, breathing on me, and raising me to life, despite myself. I'll be looking around for signs of mercy, and the love that is stronger than death. I'll be listening for some strong singing and some soft prayers and some Alleluias.

I'll taste the wine and the bread, and look into the faces of people who know me too well. And I'll try again to tell my hope.

Christ is risen. Yes.

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