

Fred Craddock tells a story

Gracious God, May these words be your words of life. Amen

Fred Craddock tells a story. A family was driving along a country road and the children spotted a kitten in the tall weeds by the side of the road. The kitten looked quite sick. "Stop", they all yelled. They wanted to take the cat home. The father protested. "We have a zoo at home already. There is no room for one more animal." But the children's begging finally got to him. He reversed the car, right there in the middle of the road and got out to pick up the kitten. It was emaciated. Its ribs were showing. You could tell that it had not eaten in ages. The fur was matted and there were wounds. He reached out to pick the kitten up and it took a swipe at him. The cat hissed and growled. Well he was just frustrated and wanted to walk away. But he looked at his children's pleading eyes. So he picked up the cat by the scruff of the neck and wrapped it in his jacket. When they arrived home the father insisted on making a place for the cat in the parent's room so that the rest of the zoo didn't bother him.

It didn't take very long before that cat became strong and beautiful. One day the father looked around to see if anyone was looking and then he gently put his hand down in front of the cat. Instead of being scarred by the claws of that cat, that cat just nuzzled up against his hand and began to purr.

Fred Craddock reflects – he imagines that when God reaches out to each one of us, we see that God's hands are covered with scars and scratch marks. Jesus reflects the hand of God. God doesn't give up....loves us....even at the ugliest times of our lives and nurtures us to transformation.

That first Easter began about dawn as Mary Magdalene made her way to the tomb. She was heavy with sadness. We don't know much about Mary, except that Jesus had healed her. She stood at the base of the cross till the bitter end. I suspect that she had not gotten much sleep since his death. In the Gospel of John's version of the resurrection there was a whole lot of running, a lot of confusion....weeping....and THEN, THEN JOY. When Mary found the tomb open, she ran to tell the others. Peter and the other disciples ran to the tomb. They suspected robbers. But the head covering for Jesus was neatly folded. Who ever heard of neat robbers?! Perplexed and confused, they went home. BUT not Mary. Mary stayed and cried enough tears to fill a stream. But then a gardener appeared before her. "Why are you weeping and who are you looking for?" She begged him to tell her where Jesus' body was. THEN, then he called her by name. And suddenly Mary recognized him. Why she didn't recognize him at first sight, we will never know. But she was ecstatic. "He lives, He lives!! Oh my God of Joy, he lives." She reached out to him. He told her to let go of him and go and tell the others.

This was a very intimate and personal story. This Jesus, who had healed Mary, who she had watched die, had risen. He had been transformed from the broken savior to the victorious savior. In the midst of tears and confusion, we too discover resurrection. Jesus calls us by name. But the question must be asked who and what are we looking

for...what do we ache for, weep for? If we don't ask those hard questions we might miss the new thing God is doing in our lives.

On this day we celebrate – children dressed to the hilt, babies and bunnies, and plants pushing their way out of the ground. But resurrection is even more profound than that. Resurrection comes at the most confusing and questioning times. It is full of surprises and tears of sadness and tears of joy. Isaiah tells us, “I am about to do a new thing.” The prophet continues “Do you not perceive it?”

- God transforms our Good Fridays into Easter mornings. God is doing a new thing. Do you not perceive it?
- God calls us to let go of the many deaths we experience in so many ways. God calls us to walk away from the tomb. For there is life beyond the tomb. God is doing a new thing. Do you not perceive it?
- God offers us new sight, new vision, new doors to walk through. For God is doing a new thing. Do you not perceive it?
- We are so used to looking at the world in one way and we fail to see Jesus standing right in front of us opening up a new world of joy. We look at the tomb, we look for a broken Jesus. And he, like a gardener is tending and nurturing new life. God is doing a new thing. Do you not perceive it?
- God takes our shrinking hearts and makes them huge. God takes dead-ends and makes them into new roads. God is doing a new thing. God IS still speaking and will always speak in our world. No one or nothing will silence God's voice.

Wendy Wright shares with her readers that at an Easter vigil in Tanzania she experienced something new. The vigil began at night and ended at dawn. AND at dawn the community began to dance. THAT is resurrection. When we think life is over, in the midst of weeping and we think we will never dance again...light comes into our lives and God teaches us to dance in new joy.

It is dawn. Do you perceive it? Let the dance with joy begin.