

April 24, 2022 Earth Day observance.

Pr. Steve

In the name of God, Abba Imma, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Christ is risen. Hallelujah!

Doubt is an important thing in science, and theology, and other fields. But doubt is not the same thing as Wisdom. Wisdom leads to open-soulness, open-heartedness. Wisdom wants to live in relationship. It's willing to expand connection. It will take risks; it lives by trust. It takes a lot to open ourselves, doesn't it?

But doubt has become very popular and easy in our society. It often appears as cleverness and sophistication--those who denigrate others all the time, who are willing to point out others mistakes and faults.

Ah, you know, you certainly don't believe that! Don't go there!

Do you have any friends like that? Total cynicism is where that ends up.

And the one thing we never doubt are our own doubts. Try that--doubting your own doubts... *Maybe I'm not as wise as I thought!*

True doubt, noble doubt, is like putting gold in a refiner's fire to burn away the dross, to burn away the impurities, all that's unnecessary, so that the true gold can emerge. That's not the way we use doubt in our society, is it? Today it's undermining; its undercutting.

The disciples were locked behind closed doors for fear of threats and intimidation. They didn't know what was going to happen next to them.

(The way we've been living the last two years, don't you think?)

And suddenly Jesus shows up, right in the midst of the darkness and the fear, and the unknowns.

And he shows up with his wounds. This is Jesus' 'street cred'. Yeah. This is what gives him some integrity to say, *'I know what you people can be like--I've experienced what humans do to each other.'*

And three things happen. There's a reunion. The disciples are thrilled. *'Great to see you! How did you get here?'* Easter Eve, remember?

The second is resolve. The disciples who were cringing with cowardice [and] terror are suddenly turned, to start looking, 'Are there other possibilities in life?'

And the third thing is reconciliation. Jesus breathes on them his peace. You know that peace you've always wanted. He breathes it into them so that they begin to become an oasis of peace themselves. Mmm. And he says, *'Now, you can forgive folks. As best you can, you have the option to forgive people...or not--keep them walled inside of closed doors in the dark and fear. You get to choose.'*

I was at a gathering with some Tibetan Buddhist friends. They had a little shop. I purchased something. As I went to pay for it, the clerk who was Tibetan, said to me, 'Would you like to get this blessed?'

'I said, 'How would that happen?'

He said, 'The monk over there in the corner--he'll gladly bless it for you.'

I said, 'He's pretty busy right now. There's a lot of people around him.'

And the clerk said, 'That doesn't matter. He's a compulsive blesser.'

Isn't that great?

You want to try that--working on your reputation this week as a compulsive forgiver? Take this assignment on--*'Oh, she's just like that. She's forgiving everybody all the time. She's kind and merciful. You know what? She's like—she's just a compulsive forgiver.'* Shall we?

And that's what Easter is about--putting our present context, our present fears, inside of a new light. What's it mean to live in a resurrected world? What does that mean? What's it mean to live in a liberated world--for us to live as if we are already liberated? How does that change what we do, and our choices?

It's not about having all the answers. I don't have them. You don't have them. That's not what faith is about. It's about living in the light as we move into the light. Faith is about moving in the light and into the light. It's acting in the light now, as we act into the light.

Peace is every step.

Now the wounds of Christ are incredibly important, but I've only begun to understand more recently that one of those wounds--I think it's the one in the left

palm--is the Earth itself, because the Earth is being crucified. And there's all kinds of people who say, 'I doubt it'. Right?

For the next generation, sitting over there in that corner [some young children], this isn't funny--and they are terrified. And we have so reduced what we think the Earth is in our society: it's just useful; it's just functional; it's for extraction. *'You know, there's some pretty places. We like those.'*

The industrial plunder is going on and on and on--which is also the industrial plunder of people--and we are cut off from that sense of wholeness, of the beauty and the magnificence, and the energy.

So, this Earth Day, I'm inviting you to nurture everything that stirs your connection with creation and creationing, because all the scientific evidence isn't persuading people. You know that? I know we know it. We have to go deeper than that. It is a vital connection practiced by each one of us, wherever it comes from--with flowers, and gardens, and streams and mountains, with oceans. Whatever it is that stirs us.

What we just sang--until the creation becomes sacred again--we will not be motivated to change and make bold changes which need to happen for their sake. *"Sacred the land, the sky, the earth."*

Sacred are we, breathing sanctity with every breath. It is possible. Christ meets us right where we are. We can live in the light now. For me, it's redwood trees, groves. The magnificence, the symphony of harmony in that light and stillness, where not one note is heard, but it permeates everything.

We were made for this, friends. We were made to commune with life, with the beauty, and the wonder, and the intimacy of it all. And when we're living inside of that communion, we begin to understand how the future path will open for all of us.

Please, don't doubt me.

Amen.

The peace which surpasses all human understanding, keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Amen.