

OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

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DIOCESE OF GRAND FALLS

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“And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. They had been saying to one another, ‘Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?’ Mk. 16: 2-3.

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

The great fear of the women who had the courage to go to the Tomb of Jesus to anoint his body was: who would roll away the stone that separated them from Jesus. They wanted to honour the body of Jesus by performing the Jewish burial customs which they were unable to do earlier on the Sabbath. And so, the women feared that if the stone remained in place, they would never see Jesus again.



But when they arrived at the Tomb of Jesus, they discovered that the stone had been rolled away and they were able to enter the tomb – now empty. In this moment, they experienced the joy of the Resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

The Gospels say very little about how the stone was rolled away. Only Matthew writes that an angel descended from God and rolled away the stone causing what seemed like an earthquake. However, I don't think that the mechanics of how the stone was rolled away are as important as understanding that God would not allow a stone – no matter how large – to separate the disciples of Jesus from seeing and believing that Jesus was Risen from the Dead. God would not allow anything to stand between Jesus and those who came to the tomb.

What are the stones of our lives and who will roll away that stone for us?

The question posed by the women is a question that, I think, deserves our reflection. In our lives, what can separate us from experiencing our Risen Lord? Is the stone physical? An addiction maybe? Is the stone of our lives emotional? Holding on to a hurt or grief? Is the stone spiritual? An absence of the feeling of God's love? What can block us from realizing the joy of

Easter? Will God do for us what was done for the women and unseal the way to Jesus and the new life of the Resurrection?

There are three Scripture accounts of people encountering the Risen Jesus but not recognizing him: Cleopas and his wife on the road to Emmaus (Lk 24: 12 ff), Mary Magdalene meeting Jesus



in the garden (Jn 20: 11 ff), and Peter deciding to return to a career of fishing (Jn 21: 1-8). While each of these stories is unique, they all have one thing in common: Cleopas and his wife, Mary Magdalene, and Peter all were experiencing an emptiness they could not fill. Each of them felt a void in their soul and a longing in their heart. And each of them, in their own way, tried to fill the emptiness but were unable to find a sense of peace. It was in these moments that Jesus revealed himself.

It was in these moments that Jesus filled the emptiness of their lives with the joy of his Presence and New Life. And it was in these moments that their lives took on new meaning and new direction.

For each of us, recognizing the Risen Jesus might mean going beyond our comfortable boundaries, allowing Jesus to touch the hidden, private corners of our hearts, moving away from doing things the same old way.

Whatever the doubt or uncertainty, whatever the fear or difficulty, whatever the temptation or poor choice, whatever the weakness or short-sightedness, whatever the loss or crisis, if we maintain a deep longing in our hearts, Jesus, our Risen Lord, will come to us and reveal himself to us.

“For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers,³⁹ nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 8: 38)

Friends, I wish each of you, your families and friends, great Easter Joy, and New Life in Christ.

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "R. Anthony Daniels". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a cross at the beginning.

Most Reverend R. Anthony Daniels
Bishop of Grand Falls