

The Rev. Andie Rohrs
St. David's Episcopal Church
Year A, 6 Easter - John 14
May 14, 2023

About six weeks ago, I found myself in the grocery store on the day after Easter. The Easter candy which had appeared just after Valentine's Day - weeks before Lent had even started - had been marked as half price. In the mind of the store, the holiday had passed and they needed that candy gone. Of course, we know the real truth. Easter is not one day but fifty - an entire season when we as the body of Christ celebrate what God has done in the resurrection. It is admittedly hard to stay in that mindset when the world has moved on, but on these Sundays, we continue to boldly proclaim "Alleluia, Christ is Risen!"

In this morning's gospel reading, Jesus is preparing his disciples and us for what life will look like after the resurrection. He foretells his death, telling them that he will leave the world in the way that they have known. But then comes the promise: *I will not leave you orphaned. I will abide with you*, he says. In the gospel of John, Jesus talks about the "Advocate" - this abiding presence, this manifestation of God in the world around us. We are more accustomed to calling it the Holy Spirit. Whatever you call it, the point is the same. Through the resurrection, we are never, ever alone. God's spirit not only surrounds us but lives within us.

Many years ago, when I was in college, my friends and I woke up on Easter morning and decided to go to the dining hall for brunch. When we got outside, we saw that in the night, a group of students had taken chalk and written HE IS RISEN all over the campus - I mean everywhere! As an Episcopalian, this was something I had heard and said my whole life in church, and I didn't think much of it. However, some of my friends were Jewish, and some did not practice any faith. And as we walked past all of the chalk graffiti, they were kind of confused. "It isn't even proper grammar," they said. I realized that technically, they were right. The verb tense doesn't work. It should be "He rose" or "He has risen." But this is a rare case where proper grammar just won't do. The truth is that HE IS RISEN reflects our reality - that the risen Christ surrounds us. This is the promise of today's gospel reading - that God is revealing Godself to us all the time through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Author Jonathan Kozol calls these revelations "ordinary resurrections." In his book by that title, he describes his experience working with children in underserved neighborhoods in the Bronx. Many of these children face extraordinary challenges of parents addicted to drugs or no parents at all, dilapidated housing and lack of health insurance, just to name a few. And yet, Kozol talks about moments in these children's lives that are ordinary resurrections - times at school or at church or at home that bring hope to them and to their communities.

Because we see the world through the lens that Christ is risen, we are able to look for ordinary resurrections in our own lives and in our world. These are all around us. It is a

moment of resurrection when we, from our various backgrounds and beliefs, gather as brothers and sisters in Christ to worship and share in the Eucharist, remembering that our shared faith transcends our differences.. It is a moment of resurrection when someone suffering from crippling grief finds the strength to begin to move on. It is a moment of resurrection when a broken relationship is healed. It is a moment of resurrection when a friend or loved one or one of us finally enters AA. It is a moment of resurrection when we experience a connection with a stranger in the checkout line or when we offer a random act of kindness to someone who desperately needs it.

Note that resurrections aren't always easy. In today's gospel, Jesus does not promise that there will not be difficult times. In fact, sometimes the transformation from death to new life comes through tremendous struggle, as many of you know from your own experience. But what Jesus does promise is that God is holding us and in the midst of all of it - the good times, the hard times, and the ordinary times. And that Advocate that John tells us about is at work within us and around us, whether we see it or not. This good news seems worth celebrating for an entire season! And so even as the world has moved on and the Easter candy is long gone, we continue to proclaim: Christ is Risen! The Lord is risen indeed. Alleluia.