



Take Hold of Jesus' Feet An Easter message from Bishop Bruce R. Ough Dakotas-Minnesota Area UMC

I am Bishop Bruce Ough. We are about to celebrate Easter – what author Frederica Mathewes –Green calls the “carnival of hope and joy.” Christ is risen! Christ is risen, indeed! Alleluia!

As Easter People – we know how the story ends; we know that in the end God wins; we know Christ conquers sin and death. For us, it is natural and reassuring to experience Easter as an explosive carnival of hope and joy. For, indeed, it is!

But, for Mary Magdalene and the other Mary, who went to Jesus' tomb on that first Easter – not so much! Matthew's gospel tells us they were filled with fear, disbelief, and astonishment. And, why not? Their world had been turned upside down; their beloved teacher and Messiah had been crucified and buried.

They no sooner arrive at the tomb, then there is an earthquake. An angel, who looks like lightning, comes and effortlessly rolls away a huge stone and they see an empty tomb. It doesn't appear to be a very safe place. No carnival of hope and joy here,--just fear and bewilderment. Which one of us wouldn't be afraid and bewildered if our world had just been turned upside down by the resurrection of a beloved friend we knew was dead and buried?

As the frightened women left the empty tomb, running to tell the other disciples what they had witnessed, the risen Jesus suddenly appears and greets them. And what do they do?

They take hold of Jesus' feet and worship him. In their bewilderment, fear and confusion, they fall on their knees, grab his feet and worship him. They want to know Jesus is real. They want to touch him. They need to feel him. They need something to grab hold of. They need to feel safe. They want to know that Jesus is truly raised from the dead. They are trying to get a grip on reality – a new reality, the reality of the risen Christ.

Christ has escaped the tomb and seeks to encounter you and me, just as he encountered the women on that first Easter. When we realize who Jesus is and what he has done for us, the only worthy response is to fall on our knees, take hold of Jesus' feet and worship him.

The risen Christ is real. His resurrection is our resurrection. His victory over sin and death is our victory. The only way to get a grip on the despair, doubt, disillusionment and death we experience in our lives is to take hold of the feet of the risen Christ and never, never let go.

Christ is risen! Take hold of him. It is the only way to have abundant life. It is the only way to make the Kingdom reality your everyday reality. It is the only way we become Easter People. It is the only way to embrace the carnival of hope and joy.

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May it be so! Happy Easter!

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