



The Life-giving Emptiness of This Easter

This Easter will be different. With April 12 no longer designated politically as an “American Resurrection” from the novel coronavirus, hopes are dashed for packed

churches and large sunrise services. There, of course, will be a few exceptions led by ill-informed pastors who will insist on holding traditional gatherings despite the threat of new outbreaks. The result will only be further suffering and death.

Yes, there is plenty of reason to lament in such a time as this, a time to be brutally honest with God and with each other as we all pass through this gauntlet of grief. But we need not lament that on Easter most of us will not be congregating physically. Instead, **we have the opportunity to turn such bane into blessing by retelling the Easter story in a way that is, in fact, most biblical.**

Christ's Resurrection did not begin (or end) with large gatherings of Christians accompanied by choirs and organ blasts. It began with an "empty tomb" and three fearful women—a tomb emptied of death. This is the Easter to ponder such emptiness, to linger over it, indeed, to revel in it. This is the Easter to let our sanctuaries and chancels, our narthexes and choir lofts, remain utterly empty, not in despair but in testimony that lives are being saved in doing so.

Emptiness, in this case, is life-giving. By abandoning our sacred gathering places, we are not abandoning the gospel. Far from it. We are testifying to what the white-robed messenger announced at the tomb, "He is not here." Perhaps these are the words we should proudly display on our church marquee signs during Holy Week: "He is not here."

Where, then, is he? According to John's Gospel, the resurrected Jesus made his first public appearance with his disciples in their social isolation, huddled in fear—a locked room. To be sure, their social isolation was for a different reason than ours. But no matter. **Christ will surely find us this Easter, wherever we have isolated ourselves.** He's done it before. "Peace be with you."



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