



The Episcopal Diocese of East Carolina

The Right Reverend Robert S. Skirving, Bishop

Easter 2021

Dear friends in Christ,

Lately, it seems, I've heard a lot of people say things like "This is not who we are!" I've heard it from those trying to make sense of the violent January 6th attack on the U.S. Capitol, from those wrestling with the racist words and actions that have been a part of life at the University of the South in recent weeks, from those reacting to mass shootings in Atlanta and Boulder, and from others attempting to make sense of their own personal realities. Sadly, events such as these DO reveal something of who we are.

On the Fourth Sunday in Lent the gospel reading that we proclaimed was a segment of the third chapter of John's gospel, in which there is an encounter between Jesus and a religious leader named Nicodemus. Nicodemus approached Jesus at night with some tough questions. As their conversation came towards its end, Jesus offered these words to Nicodemus: "And this is the judgement, that the light has come into the world and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil." (John 3: 19 - NRSV) At Christmas, we are reminded that "the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it." (John 1:5 - NRSV) The apostle Paul calls us to "live as children of light." (Ephesians 5:8 - NRSV)

While it may be the aspirational hope of our faith to "lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armor of light" (Romans 13:1 - NRSV) too many times we are drawn into the darkness. The good news of the Easter gospel makes clear that even as Jesus lived his life in full obedience to God's will, his path led him to a horrible death. And yet God raised Jesus from the grave and, in so doing, transformed the lives of those like Mary Magdalene who witnessed this act of love and power and then proclaimed this news to others.

The light of God's love is more powerful than any of the darkness of our present age. We who follow Jesus are called to be faithful to the vows of our Baptismal Covenant and to trust that God's power working in us "is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine." (Ephesians 3:20 - NRSV) As poet Amanda Gorman offered, at the Inauguration of President Joe Biden, "For there is always light, if only we're brave enough to see it. If only we're brave enough to be it."

May the light of God's love that raised Jesus from the grave be the light that brings us life when darkness threatens to overwhelm us. May God's Holy Spirit empower us to be that light for others around us.

Yours in the name of our risen Lord Jesus,

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