

11th century archbishop of Canterbury. He put forth the idea that understanding followed belief; rather than “seeing is believing,” what really matters is “believing is seeing.” Belief opens up possibilities for us as Christ’s followers. We see the world different, filled with opportunities to make the resurrection a way of life! What do you think? Perhaps the better question is what do you believe? Meditate on these questions and write your response here.

Thursday, April 24

Read once again John 20:1-23. At the core of this story is the expressions of God’s love expressed through the life of Jesus the Christ. As was mentioned in the message, Good Friday is all about the width of God’s love as Jesus spread out his arms and died on the cross. Easter Sunday is about the depth of God’s love as God reached into hell, the realm of death, and pulled Jesus back to life. What matters the most is the foundational belief that God is love (I John 4:8). How do you recognize and experience the love of God through the Easter Miracle? How is your life changed because of the events from 2000 years ago that you read about? Reflect on these questions and write your ideas here.

Friday, April 25

One more time this week, read John 20:1-23. Focus on verse 23. What do you interpret these words to mean? Easter is not just an event through which we are blessed; we are also empowered and commissioned to continue the reconciling work of Jesus in the world today? We are to offer forgiveness so that people can experience *Shalom*, the wholeness and peace possible only through our relationships with God and Jesus Christ. How are you living into this mission to which Jesus has called us? How do you feel the nudging and power of the Holy Spirit? Pray for belief and understanding as you write your reflections here.

Message Notes – April 20, 2025

*Praying With Jesus – Unexpected Blessings**

- I. Father Ron Rolheiser of Cactus Lake, Saskatchewan in Canada writes, “Biblically, we have the great tradition within which revelation from God is understood to come mostly through the stranger, the foreigner, the _____, the unfamiliar, in what’s different, in the _____.”
 - A. That first Easter morning, as Mary Magdalene approached the tomb where Jesus’ body was laid three days earlier, quickly turned to a time of fear, sorrow, _____ and desperation.
 - 1. She _____ now that her Lord was still enclosed within that borrowed tomb.
 - 2. This is a truth that many of us have come to understand: _____, so often, isn’t where he is supposed to be.
 - B. Mary pulls herself together and runs to _____ and _____, and tells them, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.”
- II. It’s fun to envision Peter and the John having a _____ toward the tomb.
 - A. Our scripture tells that they saw and _____, even though they did not fully _____ the importance of what they were seeing.
 - 1. These two great _____ of the early and ancient church entered the tomb, saw that it was devoid of a body, and believed.
 - 2. They believed _____; understanding would come _____.

*John 20:1-23

- B. Saint _____ wrote extensively about believing and understanding.
1. He reduced the issue to a nice catch phrase, *Credo ut intelligam*, that is, "I _____ so that I may _____."
 2. This is what he would call "_____ seeking understanding."

- III. Sometimes the understanding never comes on this side of _____.
- A. Friends, we're speaking about our _____ God, creator of all that exists to the ends of the universe and beyond!
- B. God is _____ and _____ never ends.
1. Christ stretched out his arms wide on the cross to demonstrate the _____ of God's sacrificial love.
 2. But Easter morning is all about the _____ of God's love.
- IV. Jesus bestowed an unexpected _____ to the disciples in an unexpected _____ and certainly an unexpected _____.
- A. The empty tomb, while initially a source of confusion and distress, becomes the ultimate symbol of _____.
- B. The final verse of our passage for this morning is a little vexing: "If you forgive the _____ of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the _____ of any, they are retained."
1. On this Easter Sunday, let us remember that _____ is likely to turn up when we least expect him.
 2. And keep in mind that our lives are _____ toward understanding, and that there is hope for both the _____ and the _____.

Daily Devotional Guide

The following is a daily devotional and study guide meant to enhance your understanding of the message and grow as a Christian.

It is offered for your personal reflection or to share with others.

Monday, April 21

The Easter Message began with the illustration of a surprise birthday party. Don't think about it too much: What is your immediate reaction to the idea of a surprise? Write your ideas here.

Tuesday, April 22

Yesterday, you considered your immediate reaction to surprises. When you think of surprises do you think positive thoughts like surprise parties or a surprise visit from someone you love? Or did you tend toward negativity such as unexpected work require of you late in the day or an unexpected bill or other bad news? Certainly, surprises can be disastrous or can turn a horrible situation around. The latter is exactly what the followers of Jesus the Christ experience on that first Easter 20 centuries ago. Mary Magdala is the central figure in the turn around events of Easter. She experienced the journey from the odious task of preparing Jesus' battered body for final burial to meeting him with joy in near the tomb that supposedly contained his body. You know the story of Easter. How is this story lived out in your life? Have you ever experienced despair turned to joy? Have you experienced resurrection in your life? Write your thoughts here.

Wednesday, April 23

Read John 20:1-23. Focus on verses 3-10. Peter and John, upon hearing about the empty tomb, ran to see the tomb for themselves. Verses 8 and 9 tell us that they saw the empty tomb and believed but did not yet understand the significance of what they were seeing. The message mentioned the writing of St. Anselm the