

Celebrating Easter might bring danger. The danger comes from our knowing in advance the outcome of the drama – that Jesus rose again. We are in danger of not being shocked by this unimaginably joyous, unprecedented event.

If we are not careful, the hair on the back of our necks will not stand up when we hear the almost unbelievable Good News.

This is so because familiarity can breed, if not contempt, then at least a ho-hum, of-course-he-rose-on-the-third-day kind of attitude. If we succumb to this familiar thinking, Jesus' death on the cross is hardly a life-changing gift, but rather a short pause in a celebration lined only with bunnies, chocolate eggs and roast lamb.

Mark's short account of the resurrection focuses on the women disciples. They were among the very few who stayed with Jesus until the end, waiting with him until he died. They knew he was dead, that it was no illusion. For them as well as for all his followers, Jesus' crucifixion and death seemed at first a crushing, disillusioning end, without hope or redemption. For them, all was lost, all was dark.

Despite their despair, they went to his tomb early that morning. Yet what these broken-hearted, still-faithful women found when they arrived was that the body of Jesus was not there. So they became the first to experience the frightening, awesome discovery that sometime during the night he had risen.

At first, however, they did not know what to make of his absent body. Terror and amazement seized them, and they fled the tomb. It was not enough just to know that the tomb was empty.

And that's where the story ends, in Mark's gospel. Later manuscripts carry some extra verses, written by someone who felt the story needed to be completed, but scholars agree these words are not those of Mark himself.

We know from other sources that these women carried the good news to their friends and remained part of the inner circle of Jesus' followers, but Mark

leaves us to imagine how they processed this strange experience on that first Easter day.

I suspect that facing Jesus' death and continuing to stay true to him afterwards helped them to discover the Resurrection. And the angel gave them the clue by telling them that they should stop looking for Jesus in death, but rather, find him alive in a new way, in the life of the world.

They found that he was alive to them in a way they could never have imagined, in a way that could never end. They discovered that what the world put to death, God raised high. This is the meaning of Easter: God's love triumphs over every barrier.

Today is *the* day in our faith to proclaim this fabulous news. The Good News of the Resurrection is that Christ is a light that overcomes all the darkness that life can entail. That light overcomes the darkness we experienced in Holy Week when we passed through vivid reminders of our human frailty and sin.

Now – today – we can declare that things are different.

Today we move with the women at the tomb into a renewed life, ready to face everything with joy, and filled with God's love, proclaiming and showing that Christ is risen, indeed. Today we shout, "Alleluia !! Alleluia !!"