

Perhaps I am romanticizing things but I feel like this Easter season. The 2020 Easter season is the closest experience I've had to the first Easter. This sort of what is going to happen next in this new unfamiliar and unexpected reality in which we are living? Is running through my mind and I have to think it was likely running through the minds of those early followers of Christ after his resurrection.

We are hunkering down, No we aren't hiding out for fear of being arrested (unless we are hosting and posting large house parties on our social media feeds) but we are hunkering down and we know that when we emerge that things will be different. How will they be different? We don't exactly know...ahhhh that is perhaps scary and maybe a little thrilling for others of us. I don't think they knew what kind of life they'd be stepping into after the resurrection of Jesus. We aren't too certain about what kind of life we'll be stepping into once we are no longer required to shelter in place. Yes, there are all kinds of guesses and speculations will we have to take our temperature to get into places, will the handshake become a thing of the past, will facemasks be the hottest accessory of 2020? We just don't know. Perhaps there was a lot of that going on in the first century as well. Will we celebrate Passover and Easter? Does someone have to become Jewish and then Christian? Is Peter really going to be our leader? Maybe it's better that they didn't know what their lives would be like or what they would encounter as a result of the resurrection of Christ.

As far as historians and scholars can tell Jesus never used the word Christian or mentioned a rollout plan for a new religion. Yet, they the followers of Jesus were ultimately responsible for taking the teachings of Jesus, sharing them with others and forming a brand new religion. They had no instruction manual or handbook to tell them how to make this happen or what steps to take. Literally the only thing they had was their time with Jesus. In the months and years that followed Jesus' death and resurrection they must have thought, "Oh I wish I could remember exactly what he said or is that what he meant by that?"

Over the course of three years they had spent time with Jesus. Jesus had shared stories, meals and walks with them, preparing them, but never explicitly telling them what they would be responsible for. What lay ahead of them. Can you imagine if he sat them down and in plain parable free language said our short term goal is I'll be crucified, rise from the dead, and ascend to heaven. I'll then send you the Holy Spirit. Our long range plan is that some of you will go proclaim my message to the Jews and others of you to the Gentiles. Yes, you are going to be hanging out with Gentiles. Don't make that face at me. You will go into the homes of the Gentiles, spend time with them, eat with them and bring them to faith. Jesus did not do this. This strategy likely would not have worked the disciples would have hit the road running back to their fishing nets upon hearing those instructions. Instead he instilled in them small bits of information, skills and knowledge likely without them even knowing. He was the original Mr. Miyagi. Never quite telling them how they would handle what they were going to encounter. Teaching them to paint the fence, wax on, wax off (if you don't know what I'm talking about go look for the original

Karate Kid movie) so that when the time came they would have the necessary tools and they would be prepared for what they would ultimately be tasked with. Loving others as they loved themselves, baptizing and making disciples his name. They knew the important the central and key components to being a person of faith and to spreading the faith. They had spent time with Jesus.

The good news is that you have spent time with Jesus too. He has spoken to you given you graces to strengthen and ready you for this day and this unfamiliar experience you are currently living through. We don't have a handbook or guide for responding to a global pandemic, to losing our job, to becoming a teacher to our children while juggling Zoom meetings. We are not born with an agenda or outline for our life, but the entire time God has been preparing us and beside us.

We may not recognize our preparations or they may seem boring and seemingly meaningless like panting a fence or sanding the floor. It's up to us to keep spending time with Jesus whether that's through prayer, conversations with others or reading scripture.

Even though each day is beginning to feel a lot like the last it's up to us to be attentive to and allow God to continue to prepare us for the unplanned and unfamiliar experiences that we are an will encounter.

#### QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

How can you spend time with God/Jesus right now?

What are some ways God has prepared you for this unfamiliar situation?

What graces or gifts have you previously experienced in your life to ready you for what you are currently dealing with?