

**2,000 + years ago some-thing happened  
that was both wonder-filled and terrifying...**

**2,000 + years ago, the women: Mary of Magdala and another Mary  
came to the tomb of Jesus only to find the stone rolled away,  
and an angel, sitting there...**

**Reassuring them:**

**“DO NOT BE AFRAID.”**

**HA! really????**

**How would you feel????**

**Yet the women somehow must have accepted what the angel said  
and once they had seen for themselves the empty tomb,  
they were filled with awe and great joy....**

**The guards, on the other hand, had fallen to the ground  
overtaken with fear as if they were dead....**

**and then as if that isn't both terrifying and wonder-filled enough...  
who do the women meet as they run back to tell others?**

**The risen Jesus himself...and his first word to them is: Shalom!  
Peace and all good things.....Shalom....  
and then he follows that up with: DO NOT BE AFRAID...**

**2,000 + years ago something happened which defies our logical, rational minds....  
yet whatever happened that Sunday morning so long ago...  
it has continued to reverberate down through the centuries...  
and it has gathered us here on this cold and sunny Easter morning...**

**So....what *ARE* we celebrating this Easter morn?**

**Are we only celebrating what happened 2,000 + years ago?**

**I certainly hope not....**

**because that would make our faith**

**an ancient artifact encrusted, entombed you might say,**

**in beliefs and worldly knowledge that is long dead, long out dated...**

**Our faith in the Easter story ought not, can not rest upon the ancient story of Matthew...**

**It must rest upon on our own 21<sup>st</sup> century experience of meeting the risen Christ**

**on the road of our every day lives...**

**We meet the risen Christ when we touch that sweet spot of kindness, forgiveness and compassion that dwells in us all.**

**We meet the risen Christ when we look inside and find that deep well of Love that is just waiting to flow forth in and through our lives...**

**We will know that we have met the risen Christ we feel the Peace of Shalom...**

**Shalom was Jesus' first word to the women...**

**When he said that, they came up and embraced him..**

**That's how they knew it was him...**

**The same will be true for us...**

**Shalom is a blessing for Peace and all good things in your life....**

**But it is not the kind of peace that the world gives...**

**It is not the kind of peace that is reliant upon everything being just right in the world...**

**it is not the kind of peace that happens our needs and wants are met...**

**It IS the kind of peace that gives us a solid ground to stand on when we are being tossed around by the chaos of life.**

**It IS the kind of peace that holds us steady and holds us open, so that we will be able to see the new life budding forth in any situation, even the toughest ones...**

**It IS the kind of peace that allows us to absolutely know that life is a beautiful gift and a noble opportunity to let Love show...no matter what the fear mongers might tell us..**

**This Shalom, the Peace of the Risen Christ ALREADY EXISTS deep inside of each of us...**

**We don't have to look anywhere else for this Peace,  
We don't have to earn it...  
we don't have to go get it,**

**All we have to do is be here right here, right now:  
open, attentive, receptive, and willing  
We do need to say yes...  
we do need to watch and listen deeply...**

**Shalom... Peace... is the Power, the Energy, the Life Force  
the Grace of the Cosmos  
Shalom...Peace...is the Presence of the Holy One that absolutely nothing can destroy!**

**Shalom...Deep Peace cannot be destroyed by the cruelty of humanity  
but.... we can be blinded to its presence by cruelty of life...  
if or perhaps I should say when,  
we allow ourselves to be overtaken by fear....**

**When we are overtaken by fear,  
we can't move, we can't function**

**we can't grow,  
we fall down as if we were dead...  
just as the guards did so long ago...  
Perhaps that is why Jesus said so many times during his life time:  
DO NOT BE AFRAID!**

**Do Not be Afraid was the first thing the angel said: ...  
and the women took the angel's words to heart and went running back to tell the disciples  
with great joy and awe when they ran right smack into Jesus....  
he says to them: Shalom ...Do Not Be afraid....**

**Fear is the greatest obstacle to life...  
When we are afraid, we shut down and close in on ourselves  
Fear is the greatest obstacle to awe  
When we are afraid everything becomes drab and threatening...  
Fear is the greatest obstacle to peace...  
When we are afraid we find ourselves building taller fences  
around our neighborhoods and our hearts ...**

**When we are overtaken by fear...  
life indeed ends.**

**2,000 + years ago the risen Jesus met the women on the road  
with greetings of Shalom! Do Not Be Afraid...**

**Hear now the risen Jesus say to us this morning...2,000 + years later...  
Close your eyes, breathe deeply...  
Hear him greet you this day:  
Do Not Be Afraid  
Shalom!**

**Shalom**

**Shalom ....**

**Amen.**