



HE IS
Risen
Easter Reflections
The Divine Intervention

April 16, 2017

Scripture

John 20: 1-9

On the first day of the week,
Mary of Magdala came to the tomb early in the morning,
while it was still dark,
and saw the stone removed from the tomb.
So she ran and went to Simon Peter
and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and told them,
"They have taken the Lord from the tomb,
and we don't know where they put him."
So Peter and the other disciple went out and came to the tomb.
They both ran, but the other disciple ran faster than Peter
and arrived at the tomb first;
he bent down and saw the burial cloths there, but did not go in.
When Simon Peter arrived after him,
he went into the tomb and saw the burial cloths there,
and the cloth that had covered his head,
not with the burial cloths but rolled up in a separate place.
Then the other disciple also went in,
the one who had arrived at the tomb first,
and he saw and believed.
For they did not yet understand the Scripture
that he had to rise from the dead.

Our Scripture Reflection

Why did the unnamed beloved disciple out run Peter on that first Easter morning? Because he loved Jesus more. His greater faith was rooted in his deeper love. He had no need once at the tomb to look inside for proof as did Peter. His love conquered all fear and doubts. So can it be for us, my friends. Happy Easter!

Food for your Journey

It would be difficult to find a better example of servanthood: Barb Westhoff stood silently next to Pastor Chris Flohr in front of the banquet crowd at the annual assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America Montana Synod. What could she possibly say? Both had just received the synod's "Spirit of Hope Award" for outstanding courage, faith and inspiration. She's the pastor at Immanuel Lutheran Church in Westby. He's at St. Paul in Missoula.

Pastor Westhoff has polycystic kidney disease. It runs in her family and is serious. Her kidneys were failing, and hope was running thin. She needed a kidney, and all the usual donor prospects, her siblings, were afflicted just as she was. The waiting list for kidneys is very long. Day by day, her condition worsened. What could Westhoff possibly do, except pray for a miracle? She got one in Chris Flohr.

He'd read in the synod newsletter a call for prayers for Pastor Westhoff, so he inquired about her. Learning of her kidney disease, he e-mailed her, "What's your blood type?" That's a fairly personal question to ask someone you barely know, but Chris Flohr is an unusual kind of person. When he found their types were compatible, he offered to undergo more testing to see if he was a match. He was. So, he gave her one of his kidneys.

In doing so, Flohr offered Westhoff a whole new life. A new kidney, from a living donor, would mean no more feeling lousy all day. A new kidney meant she could plan for a long, fruitful ministry and a long, loving marriage. So they both entered a Denver hospital — he to give her life back to her and she to receive it. A month later, they stood together on the assembly stage.

What words can you say to someone who gives such a precious and wonderful gift? Pastor Westhoff couldn't find any at that banquet. She just looked at Flohr through teary eyes. He humbly looked at his shoes. It's hard to tell who was more blessed by the experience. But that's the way it always is in such cases.

—swmnelca.org

On August 16, 1987, Northwest Airlines flight 225 crashed just after taking off from the Detroit airport, killing 155 people.

One survived: a 4-year-old from Tempe, Arizona, named Cecelia.

News accounts say when rescuers found Cecelia they did not believe she had been on the plane. Investigators first assumed Cecelia had been a passenger in one of the cars on the highway onto which the airliner crashed. But when the passenger register for the flight was checked, there was Cecelia's name.

Cecelia survived because, even as the plane was falling, Cecelia's mother, Paula Chican, unbuckled her own seat belt, got down on her knees in front of her daughter, wrapped her arms and body around Cecelia, and then would not let her go.

Nothing could separate that child from her parent's love — neither tragedy nor disaster, neither the fall nor the flames that followed, neither height nor depth, neither life nor death.

—Keith Smith, "How to win the Christian race," Bible Center Web Site, Biblecenter.com.

A Prayer from the Heart

O Lord,

Risen, alive and full of grace.

You paid such a price that we may live in freedom today.

We worship your holy name and give thanks for your redeeming grace.
Amen.