

Let us pray, loving God we give thanks for the joy of Easter morning for your presence with us and your love for us. Alleluia. Christ is risen... Amen...

I have always been afraid of heights... But I have been able to find enough courage a few times to go up the van douser tower on Rib Mountain... However, I have never been able to make my way over to the railing and look over the edge, as that is just too much for me...

So, I have no idea how, when I was in college, that I allowed my friend to talk me into going... skydiving...

But somehow, I arrived at the skydive facility, I took the classes that were required, I signed a bunch of waivers, filled out paperwork, and picked out my pink jump suit.

My nerves, needless to say, were all over the place, but I think that the adrenaline and excitement was keeping my fear somewhat at bay...

I met the instructor that I was going to be jumping with and we had a nice little chat... And then something came over me and I said...

Do you ever feel like your life is a video game? Because right now, if I was in a video game the music would be dahnah.... For those of you unfamiliar with that little ditty, that is from the original Old School Nintendo, and it would play whenever something scary was happening...

He laughed and we continued by picking out our parachute and going over how to properly exit the plane...

And before I knew it, we were on the plane... And this plane was made specifically for skydiving as it had a very unique door... it was towards the front of the plane and was like a small garage door that you could pull open with one hand... Not very secure if you ask me!

Now I don't know what I was expecting, but before I knew it the plane was very high in the air, and then all of a sudden, someone reached over and pulled up the side door of the plane!

I was immediately terrified and I thought that we were all going to be sucked out... But alas the plane remained stable...

And then, one by one people started jumping out...

My hands were shaking and I was sweating profusely... I knew there was no way... at all... that I could do this... I was embarrassed, but the fear was just too great, so I had to let my instructor know that I couldn't go through with it...

And as I turned around, to tell him... I must have had the most terrified look on my face, because before I could even speak, he grabbed onto me and said...

Dahnanananana....

Which caused me to laugh and gave me just enough courage to crawl to the edge of the plane and jump out...

That day I experienced so many emotions... I experienced them intensely and also through a short period of time...

But if I had to boil them down, the main emotions that I experienced were fear... and... joy...

And fear and joy are two emotions that we heard about in our gospel reading from today...

As we are told that the women at the tomb also experienced fear and joy...

Fear, that I can imagine was similar to mine... the exciting kind of fear... The kind of fear that is filled with anticipation... and a whole lot of hope...

And we know this because they were going to the tomb, to see it... To see if Christ wasn't there... Which had to have been the most exciting kind of fear.

Now if you haven't been sky diving, you can still relate to this kind of fear...

For example, if you're a Packer fan, this is similar to the kind of fear you may get before, they start playing.... Or the kind of fear you get before going on a roller coaster ride...

Because this is the kind of fear that usually precedes joy...

Joy that you find when the Packers get a touchdown... Or joy that you find after you accomplish something that previously brought you fear...

Joy that is a little different than the joy of Easter morning...

Because the kinds of joy I shared are circumstantial and are connected with a specific event or experience, but you can get the gist of what I'm getting at.

But Easter joy is different...

Easter joy is not just for Easter morning...

Because Easter joy is with us every day, and is found in the good news that Jesus Christ lives among us...(pause)...

And we are invited to share this good news... So that others can experience this pure joy...

Just as Jesus told the woman to go and tell others, we too are called to do just that ...

Because this first Easter morning changed everything...

On that day, a new creation was formed... One where death no longer has the final word.

One where Christ lives and dwells among each of us...

As the resurrection was a cosmic event... It was so intense that it woke the earth up from its bowels, causing the ground to shake...

So that the earth could be restored, and reconciled into Christ's very being.

A reconciling so intense it required a ground shattering earthquake...

Which must have been quite scary, and no wonder we hear that those who witnessed this cosmic event were afraid...

And yet we are told to not be afraid, because this kind of fear informs us that there is nothing to fear because, Christ has risen...

Fear that is irradiated and all that is left behind is joy...

But even though we have nothing left to fear, we all still get afraid from time to time...

But a little bit of fear, especially this good kind of fear can be helpful...

As it inspires us into action... So, we can find the courage to embrace the shaking ground, our own easter earthquakes, and step out into life anew.

To share God's love with others, through your words and through your actions...

Which may at times feel like you are stepping out into thin air...

Or freefalling down to the earth from the sky...

Which I can attest is both fearfully awesome, and joyfully exhilarating...

So today, I invite you to take that leap of faith...

Because you have something better than a skydive instructor... You have Christ, and his arms are always wrapped around you...

So that you can embrace the air... Breathe it deep into your lungs, and share this good news.

Good news that isn't going anywhere, as this is the kind of good news where joy can always be found... Alleluia! Christ is risen... Amen