

# *Clouds and a Rainbow*



One morning recently, I was in our backyard and glanced up at the grey clouds covering the sky. They seemed to image just how I felt at that moment. I was not particularly depressed, but I was a bit down, in a little pain and wondering what the day would bring. One might say I was in a 'Lenten' mood! After doing a few small jobs, I looked up again at the sky, and unexpectedly saw part of a double rainbow! It was not a magnificent one, but with its curves of bright colours cutting across the grey clouds it transformed everything. I stood still, thanked God for what I was seeing, and then took the above photograph.

Sun and water, basic elements of life on our planet, are needed to form rainbows. The sunlight must come at a certain angle into droplets of water enabling refraction and reflection to take place and a rainbow to appear. To form the second rainbow, sunlight is reflected twice in the droplets, causing colours to be reversed and faded. Viewers also need to look in the right direction to see the rainbow.

I suggest that grey clouds and a rainbow can together portray something about the events on the first Easter day and later in Galilee, when Jesus' disciples who were grieving, confused and feeling lost, unexpectedly experienced the joy of Jesus' living presence with them.

Mary Magdalene seemed to be the first to see and recognise the risen Jesus. In John 20:1-18, she went to the tomb early in the day when it was still dark, and was appalled to find the stone moved. She ran and told the disciples that Jesus' body was gone. Then she returned to the tomb in the garden, not only grieving but also upset by the loss of Jesus' body. A stranger, whom she thought was the gardener, asked her why she was weeping. She was too distraught to look at him, and only asked, that if he had taken the body from the tomb could she have it. The man replied by saying her name, "Mary". Immediately she knew he was Jesus and wanted to hold on to him. Instead she was sent to tell the disciples that Jesus was alive.

Later, on the same day, we read in Luke 24:13-43, that Cleopas and another disciple were walking home from Jerusalem to Emmaus discussing Jesus' death, and the women's puzzling message to them that he was alive. Presently a stranger joined them. He listened to them and explained that the Messiah had to suffer before entering his glory. On arriving at Emmaus, the disciples invited the man to stay and eat with them. He did so. Then at the table he; "took bread, blessed and broke it and gave it to them." Immediately they recognized that Jesus was their guest, and he disappeared from them.

The two went straight back to Jerusalem to tell the gathered disciples they had seen and talked with Jesus. While they were sharing this news, Jesus appeared among them, offering peace. The disciples struggled to believe this person was Jesus and thought he was a ghost. Jesus proved his identity and that he was a real person by showing them his hands and feet, inviting them to touch him, and eating some fish.

Some days or weeks later, in John 21:1-14, Simon Peter and six other disciples were in Galilee, and decided to do something familiar. They went fishing in their boat. They fished all night but caught nothing. In the morning, a stranger on the shore directed them to fish on the right side of the boat. They did so, and to their amazement their net was filled with fish. The disciples then realized that the stranger on the shore whose advice they had obeyed, was Jesus.

We might have expected that the risen Jesus would show he was alive by appearing as a triumphant figure in the temple, but instead he came to his

disciples as a friend, in ordinary places and situations - in a garden, on a road, at a meal and at their work. The risen Jesus can also come to us in nature, walking in the street, at home eating with us and directing us in our work - if we are open to welcome and recognize him.

Each of us is known and loved dearly by God whose Spirit dwells within us. This does not mean we shall be free of pain, grief or distress in life, but rather that Jesus will be with us in it. As new life came through Jesus' death on a cross, so new life and joy can come to us through our suffering.

We have journeyed through Lent with all its struggles, grief and failures, and are now at Easter. The affirmation at Easter of the risen Jesus being always with us wherever we are, physically, socially or emotionally, can strengthen our faith. He has overcome the power of evil with love and offers us a share in that love, which we are to share with others.

When we feel low and see a grey sky, we need to change any negative view of it by remembering that dark clouds can bring rain to benefit all life on earth, and that the sun will return to warm us and light our way. Further, when sunlight and rain drops come together and we see the wonder and beauty of a rainbow displayed on dark clouds, we can, like the troubled disciples, experience something of the joy of knowing the living presence of our loving and risen Lord Jesus Christ with us.

*Sister Helen CSC*

*April 2024*