Easter – Year A
Acts 10:34-43; Colossians 3:1-4; John 20:1-18

When my son was around two to three years old, we had a morning routine. While I was lying in my bed and beginning to wake up, I would hear the pitter patter of his feet coming down the hall towards my room. So, I would lie on my side, with my eyes closed, and wait a minute or two. I could hear him come right up to the side of the bed. He was just tall enough that his eyes would peer over the top of the mattress. I would wait…and then open my eyes. And, immediately, he would say, “Wanna play?” I would say, “Yes,” and he would run back down the hall to his room, come back with an armful of stuffed animals, climb into bed with me and we would make up a game with his teddy bears. Some mornings I was just so tired and really wanted another ten minutes of sleep. But, as new parents are often told, I knew that time with him would fly by, that he would be that particular, precious age only for a short time, and so we played. Time is fleeting.

My son is now in college. Last month I went out to Boston to visit him for a couple of days while he was on Spring Break. We went to see a great exhibit at the Museum of Natural History – a collection of glass flowers - 4,000 models representing 830 plant species – all made of glass. The collection, created over a 50-year period at the turn of the century by a father and son team in Dresden, Germany, was commissioned for the purpose of teaching botany. While I was amazed that this entire 4000-piece collection is made of glass, one of the descriptions I read made me stop and wonder. The particular species being described existed for only 150 years – extinct after only 150 years. Time is fleeting.

There is no time to waste. The time is now to see: God is living with us. When we
assimilate, when we absorb this truth, we are forever changed. We see and hear and feel and understand and love through a life-giving lens. We hear the urgency in our Gospel lesson this Easter morning. Mary Magdalene loved Jesus. She goes to his tomb to mourn his death. But, the stone at the entrance of the tomb has been removed and the tomb is empty. What has happened? Where is he? Mary runs. She runs to the disciples and tells them that Jesus’ body is no longer in the tomb. They run back. What has happened? Where is he? Where is the most precious body of the one they loved, the one they were mystifyingly drawn to, the one who gave meaning to all of life? Where is he?

Mary weeps. She weeps over this terrifying loss. And, then, Jesus is standing there, beside her, and asking her why she is weeping. Mary doesn’t realize it is Jesus. She pleads with him to tell her where they have taken Jesus’ body. She doesn’t recognize him until he says, “Mary!” She doesn’t recognize him until he calls her by name. Jesus is calling us by name. He is saying, “I know you. I love you.”

Each time a painter puts paint to canvas, she blends the colors differently and uses different strokes to create a new work of art. Did you know that Monet’s Water Lilies is a collection of almost 250 oil paintings, each a unique perspective on Monet’s gardens at his home in Giverny? From the vast array of colors available to the painter, he creates, even in slight variations, a unique work of art. Jesus knows our uniqueness, our blend of colors. Whatever unique combination of traits that makes you you…Jesus knows you and loves you. Right now, imagine Jesus calling your name. His voice resonates with the longing of the human heart to be known and to be loved.

Time is fleeting. Let us not miss out on experiencing the deep peace and profound joy from being known and loved, the deep peace and profound joy which is God sustaining and
inspiring us in this challenging world. About eight years ago, I was at a conference and one of the presenters was Beth Chapman, a singer/songwriter. She sang for us one of her songs entitled *Every December Sky* (*Deeper Still*, Artemis Records, 2002). Here are the words: “Every December sky / must lose it’s faith in leaves / and dream of the spring inside the trees / how heavy the empty heart / how light the heart that’s full / sometimes I have to trust what I can’t know / if I could hold you now / you’d enter like a sigh / you’d be the wind that blows the answer to why / you’d be the spring-filled trees of / every December sky.” Chapman told us that when she finished writing this song, she wondered what it was about. Why had it been written? Two years later, she received a cancer diagnosis. This song was healing for her throughout that ordeal. “You’d enter like a sigh and be the spring-filled trees of every December sky.”

Where is He? He is here calling us, passionately, by name. He knows us and loves us for one another. On this Easter morning, we know this to be true: Jesus came so we would know that God is loving us in the ongoing, every-day, co-creative process which is life. Jesus inspires our beliefs and our actions. He prioritizes our life and helps us understand the unique role we play in caring for others and for this world. Jesus is our truest companion in life, comforting us in our sorrows. He suffered…he understands…he loves us with a fully empathetic heart. Most importantly, on Easter morning, we stand in awe, because he came back. Jesus came back. Not even the sting of death would stop Him from loving us. Love broke through the barrier between life and death and proclaimed, “I will never stop loving you. I am always loving you.” When you are burdened by life’s challenges, when your heart is troubled, when you are overwhelmed by the suffering in this world, rest in God who is loving us individually into redemption for all. Rest and draw strength and inspiration and hope for the new day. Listen. He is calling your name. Listen and know the simplest and most profound truth of life: Love is
God. Amen.