

Easter Day is great—it is like a great big religious party that brings many of our parish friends back together again, and also maybe some of our family too, in the midst of exciting music and spiritual hope. Yeah for Easter!

Then, according to the Episcopal Church and many other Christian worship traditions, there are always *six more* Sundays of Easter after that. That is a lot of Easter! What easily happens is that *by this Seventh Sunday of Easter, we may have about run out of Easter energy and are ready to move on*. And it can feel strange to even admit that—that we may be ready to move on past something as monumental as the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. And yet, our lives are full of so many other things calling for our attention—things at home, things at work, things here in our community, things in the world. *Moving on to other things* after celebrating something as earth-shattering as Jesus' resurrection...might feel tricky. Does the fact that we can move on—and need to move on—mean that Easter really isn't all that important—or real--after all? Does it mean that our faith has failed—if we need to move on?

Maybe the closest comparison to the dilemma of moving beyond Easter is what we can experience after someone we love dies. It has been over a decade now since my parents died and every now and then they will come to mind suddenly. And it can feel so strange that I am still living my life *beyond them* after having lived so much of my life *with them*. How can that be? Does that mean they aren't important anymore? Does that mean I don't love them as much anymore? *No, it doesn't mean any of that—they are still important and I still love them. And I am supposed to move on. And yet also not forget them.*

The Bible tells us as much about Easter too. There is a curious thing about the Easter story that is easy to miss. *Something happens there that actually calls us to move beyond Easter*. And it is the story of the *Ascension* of Jesus. As described in the Book of Acts and other biblical references, after spending weeks with his disciples after the resurrection, a time finally came when Jesus...*moved on*...and left his disciples... “ascending into heaven” and disappearing into the glory of God. After that point, Jesus was no longer to be seen again on earth.

It can be tempting for us to write off the story of the Ascension as yet another bizarre thing that we have to somehow try to believe in. But the Ascension actually isn't quite so bizarre, at least in one important way. In this story is a frank admission of something we already experience...*that as important as Easter really is...we are supposed to move beyond it. It isn't that Easter isn't real. And it isn't that there is something wrong with our Easter faith. Easter takes us beyond Easter. There are things we are supposed to move on toward.*

*Jesus returned to God so that we can turn to each other in a new way.* That's what the first disciples did soon after Jesus left—they all started gathering together and turning toward their relationships with each other...and others too. It was what Jesus had been talking about all along: “If you love me, you will love one another...” *The mystery of Jesus and Easter and the Ascension is supposed to take us right back to ordinary life—but with new eyes and new hearts and ready hands to attend to this world differently and to love it better.*

*And Jesus returned to God so that something...someone...else would come to us.* Jesus used different names for this: “an Advocate”... “Comforter”... “Counselor”... “Teacher”...the “Holy Spirit”. So began the story of “the third person of the Trinity” which we name in our Creed--and that story is where we are headed next Sunday on the Day of Pentecost. *Jesus moved on because it was time for God to do another new thing, called the Holy Spirit.*

*Living on the other side of Easter is the way it is supposed to be. God had more plans for what was next. And we are already living in it. We are supposed to be moving on to the next things in our lives, and yet not forgetting Easter. The attention we give to each other and the world is exactly what we are called to do. Being together as “church” and tending to the world—is what we are supposed to do. It can seem so ordinary but it really isn't. Because a new reality of God [in the Holy Spirit] is among us, in the midst of the pain and the blessings of the world.*