

## EASTER VIGIL      2011

Epitaphs, words written on tombstones, often speak to us about the character of the persons buried there. Jesus did not have an epitaph because the tomb did not hold him for long. But if an epitaph could be chosen to stand over his grave for only a day, the words of John Knox, the Scottish reformer, would do very well. Knox wrote "*Other gods have been as devoutly worshipped. No other man has been so devoutly loved.*"

It was to anoint the body of this so loved man, Jesus of Nazareth, that the women came to the tomb early on that Sunday morning. What they found on arrival left them anxious and alarmed: stone rolled away, guards fled and tomb empty. Except that there was a young man, sitting there, waiting for them: a messenger. "He is not here. He is risen." With these simple and startling words that young man announces to all the world that the prince of peace is among us.

Violence has played itself out, but it has not won. How hard it is for us to learn that lesson. We are not prepared to suffer, as Jesus did, when we are wronged or attacked. Our response is rapid and sometimes ruthless. In personal life or international life, we play the strong man, and resist evil with evil, force with force.

The disciples of Jesus were instructed to make their way to Galilee. There, reunited with the Lord, they would go back to school and begin to see and understand the pattern of their lives. From Galilee they would go out to the whole world to tell the story and preach the good news. But not all the news is easy to absorb or understand. Especially the part about suffering and death and non-violence.

But Easter is the feast of non-violence. It is the celebration of Christ, the prince of peace. All those who wish to celebrate this feast are invited, in their turn, to "Go to Galilee." There the risen Lord awaits you and will lead you on pathways of peace. The world still needs to meet Jesus, the man so devoutly loved.