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In today's gospel we hear about the women who were the first witnesses of the resurrection: there were Mary Magdelene, Joahnna, Mary the mother of James, and the others who are not even named. Scripture tells us that they were from Galilee, in the region where Jesus had been born. They had been Jesus' followers and supporters from the very beginning, some of his earliest disciples.

I would like to introduce you to another woman who was a disciple of Jesus; her name is Renee Beger. For many of us, she needs no introduction.

- Renee was born in Detroit in the 1930's.**
- She and her husband raised seven children in a small home just a few blocks from here.**
- She was an active member here when the parish was a young thriving in the 1950's & 60's and saw the parish grow to 1,500 households; there were 500 children in the school.**
- Her husband was successful in establishing an assessor's business which her sons now run.**

- The family eventually moved into a much larger home in Farmington Hills.

But like the women in today's gospel who were living full lives and following the Lord and were shocked that first Sunday morning when they visited the tomb, something earthshaking happened to Renee. No, Jesus did not appear to her, nor did young men in dazzling garments proclaim Christ's resurrection to her. But what shocked her was that one of her daughters fell in love with a black man. Renee had already come to be at ease with a racial mix. It had been happening in her neighborhood for years. But having neighbors of a different race is much different than for a person of her generations to have a man of color as her son-in-law. It rocked her life just as much as the death of Jesus crushed the hopes of women and men who had followed Jesus. How would she handle this? How would her relatives and friends take this event? Life would never be the same.

But then, something happened to Renee Beger, the disciple of the Lord.

- Slowly the Lord began to speak to her pleading heart.

- Slowly she came to see the depth of the goodness of her new son in law.
- Slowly she came to appreciate the action of God in her life.
- Slowly she came to see new life in what had seemed first to be a bitter death.

Yes, Renee, the disciple of the Lord, was much like the women in today's gospel. They were the first to work through their grief over his death and be open to the news that the Lord was risen and with them. At first they were terrified by the news of what the two men in dazzling garments at Jesus' empty tomb had told them. They ran from the tomb to tell the apostles but the men simply would not, except for Peter, even consider their findings worthy of a hearing.

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So what do we do with the news of Jesus' resurrection, that the Lord is calling us to die and rise with him? Well, let me tell you how Renee Beger handled it. She and her husband continued to be members of this faith community. Once her husband died, Renee would come to daily mass in her driving her Jaguar.

- She always had a hug and greeting for people of all backgrounds, giving to each of them a special name such as “Hi sweetie”, or “How is it going, gorgeous”.
- She always had a little joke to bring a smile to your face.
- She would help anyone in need. (Tell the story of her and Msgr. Fedewa helping with Meals on Wheels).
- She would continually decorate the dining room table in the rectory with fresh flowers making sure that the color of the flowers matched the color of each liturgical season.
- She invited countless members of the parish up to her family’s cottage for some R and R.

In her last few years on earth, Renee was quite sick with lung disease; she needed to be on oxygen and had to wear an uncomfortable body brace. Yet she continued to wear a smile, tell a quick joke and carry on.

When she became bedridden and was confined to her house, God gave her a special gift. One of her grandchildren, a young adult, left college and came to care for her. The young woman who cared for her happened to be the offspring of her daughter who had married a man of color.

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Yes, there are many women in today's gospel who were the first to learn of the resurrection.

There was Mary Magdelene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James and unnamed others. And there were women who were the first to announce to this community the good news that the risen Lord was in the hearts of all who were moving into our midst. And one of them was Renee Beger.

My brothers and sisters, we are special inheritors of both groups of women:

From the gospel women we inherit the good news that Jesus is risen and with us.

From Renee and the women of today, we learn that the spirit of the Lord is within ALL of us and that we, even in our confusion and amazement, need to be sharers of that good news to a doubting world.

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I sometimes ask myself: Why is it that people born in 15 different countries have found a home as a member of Corpus Christi?

Why is it that people from three different merged parishes could work together and form our family?

Why is it that people feel welcome and wanted the first moment they walk through the doors of the church?

It is because women, and men, like Renee Beger have suffered, died and risen with Christ. It is because they have chosen to boldly and courageously share the good news with others. Let us follow such a great company of witnesses on this Easter day of Resurrection.

In whatever challenges we face, *Enjoy Christ's Peace & Give Witness.*

For he is Risen!