

Dear sisters and brothers,

The scriptures give us a picture of two levels of resurrection:

the resurrection we anticipate after death

and the resurrection we can experience every day.

This daily possibility of being raised up (or resurrected)

exists alongside something else inside us that seems to want to drag us down.

Sometimes we feel a kind of struggle inside us between these two forces.

It's not just early Christian authors who pointed to this struggle.

The American president, Abraham Lincoln,

seems to have been influenced by the British author, Charles Dickens,

when Lincoln used that famous term "our better angels."

Dickens imagined "our better angels" as heavenly bodies that shown in the sky.

He named them: "Charity, Forbearance, Universal Love, and Mercy."

To really see them *would be* a vision of glory and an *experience* of being raised up.

But Dickens went on to say,

"...the shadows of our own desires stand between us and our better angels,

and thus their brightness is eclipsed."

St. Paul couldn't have said it better.

Fortunately for us, resurrection is not something we do for ourselves.

SomeOne else resurrects us...even on a daily basis.

There is a Life inside us, which is larger than our own,

that wells up hope in us

and that invites us to trust and to love.

Or as Dickens would say, not just unspecific trust and love,

but charity, forbearance, *universal* love, and mercy.

These are our better angels; they are a gift to us;

and they are an experience of God's power to raise us up.

One last important thing to add: the Christian life is not a solitary life

but a communal one...

and one that is fully engaged in the wider world.

Lincoln was talking to his *co-citizens*,

regardless of whether they shared his faith.

And we must engage our fellow citizens as well.

We care for the whole world because God cares for the whole world.

We need to work with all who want to pay attention to our better angels.

There is a great "raising up," a great resurrection, that happens

when social systems move in the direction of our better angels.

May you experience the power of God's Spirit

working in you, raising you up, not just on the last day but on every day.

And may you act with hope and courage with all people

who feel so inclined to be lifted up beyond our lesser angels.

May this be a year we experience Easter more deeply!

Your brother,

+Francis

Presiding Bishop, ECC