Easter can be a Time of “New Normal”

If you were following the business news after the most recent downturn in the economy, many “so-called experts” were throwing around the term “new normal.” Its relationship to the economy is where jobs are lost and individuals and governments have to modify their old habits of excessive spending. Similarly, I recently read an article about professional golfer Phil Mickelson who was discussing the “new normal” in his life after having dealt with issues of cancer in his family as well as several serious, career threatening physical ailments of his own. After having experienced these traumatic ordeals in his life, Mickelson discussed a very optimistic future for himself and his family that he termed the “new normal.”

On the CBU campus, the new normal can be seen as our students grow in knowledge and wisdom during their college experiences under the mentorship of our faculty and staff and gain a better world perspective. They must constantly adjust to new ways of looking at the world and finding meaningful relationships...an ever changing new normal for them.

I am convinced that this concept of new normal can be applied to our relationship with God and our neighbors. As we approach Easter Sunday and the celebration of Jesus Christ’s resurrection, we hear about the disciples who spent time with Jesus during his public life as a man. Although they witnessed many miracles during his public life, suddenly and unexpectedly, after Jesus rose from the dead, these disciples had to deal with a new normal, one that transcended even life and death. In looking at the post-Resurrection scriptures, one discovers rich stories of those simple fishermen struggling to find their way within a new normal. The story of doubting Thomas epitomizes their struggles. This new normal was a way of viewing the world that God’s people had never previously experienced, but whose ramifications would forever affect all who believe.

If we look only at the scripture readings for the Easter Vigil, we find that they are filled with examples of God’s view of the new normal for each of us. What do they tell us?

In Genesis’ story of creation, we witness a wonderful testimony to the beauty and goodness of the earth, the heavens, and all of God’s creatures. Later in Genesis, Abraham has to face a new normal as he is asked to sacrifice his only son Isaac, only to be spared that action at the last minute because of his tremendous faith in God. In Exodus, Moses brings the Israelites to a new normal by leading them across the Red Sea while the Egyptian chariots pursue them.

In Isaiah, God invites us to strive for greater values: The Lord says, “My thoughts and my ways are like yours. Just as the heavens are higher than the earth, my thoughts and my ways are higher than yours.”

Finally, in Mark’s gospel, we hear the encouraging words: He (an angel) said to them, “Do not be amazed! You seek Jesus of Nazareth, the crucified. He has been raised; he is not here. Behold the place where they laid him. But go and tell his disciples and Peter, ‘He is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him, as he told you.’
So what is this new normal for each of us living in the 21st century? Let me propose that this year during the Easter season, we look back on our normal lives over this past year, and adjust our actions accordingly to create a new normal for ourselves, one that more closely follows the life and teachings of Jesus. Keep performing the activities that strengthen our faith, and try to eliminate those actions that move us away from our God.

May the Easter Season bring you peace, happiness, God’s love, and a new normal better than any old normal you have ever experienced.