



April 9, 2023

The Resurrection of Our Lord-Easter Sunday

On the first day of the week, Mary of Magdala came to the tomb early in the morning, while it was still dark... John 20:1



Dear Friends,

Mary Magdalene's great love for Jesus kept her standing at the cross weeping and grief-stricken as he died. The pain of her great loss drives her to the tomb in the darkness before dawn. She came to anoint his body according to Jewish burial customs. She assumes the worst when she encounters the empty tomb—someone stole his body.

She reports the empty tomb to the apostles who go to check it out for themselves. Men tended not to trust the testimony of a woman in this culture. Mary follows Peter and the 'beloved disciple' back to the tomb. After she looks inside the tomb, she catches sight of someone she assumes is the gardener (in one sense she is correct he is the gardener of a new Paradise).

When the stranger calls her name, her eyes are opened to recognize the risen Lord. He tells her "*Do not cling to me.*" In other words, you cannot hold on to me the way I was. He commissions her to go to the other disciples and tell them, "*I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God!*" The Risen One is telling us that he is our present and future destiny.

Mary Magdalene, a woman, is the first to see the risen Christ. He appoints her to go and tell the others what she has seen and heard. Only the Gospel of John tells us that Mary Magdalene went to the tomb unaccompanied by other women. This would have been culturally unusual. This is the author of John's Gospel way of emphasizing the importance of Mary Magdalene. Magdalene is the first to experience the resurrection, and the first to proclaim it. She is the "*Apostle to the Apostles.*" Mary's mission breaks cultural taboos about women's roles.

According to a legend, after Jesus' ascension to heaven, Mary Magdalene, a woman of rank and importance, boldly went to see the Roman Emperor, Tiberius, to proclaim the resurrection. Holding out an egg to illustrate her message she proclaims, "*Christ is risen!*" The emperor mocking her said, "Jesus has no more risen from the dead than the egg in your hand is red." Immediately, the egg turned red as divine affirmation of her message.

For many cultures before Christianity the egg was a symbol of the cosmos, spring, and rebirth. For Christians the egg took on the additional meaning of the resurrection. Just as new life emerges from the eggshell, life will break forth leaving behind the empty tomb. The Easter egg is a symbol of our faith in the resurrection, and it is also a symbol for the rebirth of creation and all humankind. In many places around the world red-dyed, or painted eggs are exchanged on Easter Sunday. We share Easter eggs as a joyful sign of our Christian hope.

We pray like Mary Magdalene we can truly experience the risen Lord. He is present in his body assembled here in his name, we hear him speak the word of God's mercy, and are nourished and refreshed at the meal of his very body and blood. And he is with us as we cultivate a garden of life: proclaiming justice, mercy, and the love of God for us all.

Christ is risen!

Fr Ron

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