

Easter 2014 Trinity Aurora

No one ever loved Jesus more than Mary Magdalene. He had done something for her that no one else could ever do, and she could never forget. Mary is the supreme instance of one who went on loving and believing. She could not understand all the horrible things that had happened over the last few days.

How was it possible that he had been hunted down, betrayed, abandoned by his men, judged under false testimony? Then he was whipped and beaten, executed by the most extreme and hideous means. Hanging naked along the roadway, taunted and mocked by passersby, He died dehydrated, bleeding from vicious wounds, fully aware of his painful agony until he gasped his last words. She had witnessed nearly all of it.

In the early grey darkness of dawn, Mary came to the tomb because she could no longer stay away. Custom prohibited visiting a grave on Saturday, the Sabbath. On Sunday, the first day of the week, she arrived at the tomb and again was amazed and shocked.

The stone sealing the tomb was wheeled away. Two things may have entered her mind. She may have thought the authorities had taken away Jesus' body; that, not satisfied with killing him, they were inflicting further indignities on him. There also were ghoulish fiends who made it their business to rob tombs. Could this have happened here?

It was a situation Mary felt that she could not face herself; so she returned to the city to seek out Peter and John. The empty tomb terrified her all the more.

In my ministry as a priest, I make regular visitation to those who are hospitalized. If they are able to visit, we share things about the diagnosis and treatment, or accident or injury. I bring communion to them and anoint them with holy oil. Sometimes I have been called to come quickly as the patient is critical.

On a few occasions, I have gone to the assigned room, walked into it and the bed was empty. At first, I have thought I was in the wrong room. Sometimes, the patient has been moved to another unit. But it has happened a few times that emptiness is all I see because the patient has died and been removed. I've seen family members experience the same thing. Believe me, it is a deeply saddening moment of confusion and loss. Perhaps, you have experienced something similar.

Peter and John return with Mary to the empty tomb.

John looks in, but Peter goes in. The tomb is empty; the body is gone. But then why didn't the tomb-robbers leave the grave-clothes? Then something else: John sees that the shroud is not disheveled and disarranged. The whole point of the description is that they did not look as if they had been put off or taken off; they were lying there as if the body of Jesus had simply evaporated out of them.

The part that love plays in this story is extraordinary. It was Mary who loved Jesus so much, who was the first at the tomb. It was John, the beloved disciple, who was first to believe in the Resurrection. But it was Mary who, shortly after Peter and John left, was the first to see the Risen One.

It was through the power of their love for Jesus that they came to understand that Jesus was not gone. The bonds of affection were not severed, nor ended. Their love grasped the truth. Here is the message for you and me to ponder again this Easter.

You see, we can neither understand Jesus nor help others to understand Him unless we take our hearts to Him as well as our minds.

Faith is not assent to some list of historical statements. It is not just intellectual, or scholarly, belief in the Gospel Story. No, no, far more it must engage the heart, to the point where we are moved emotionally. We must come to feel as well as think in the power of the Resurrection.

Isn't that what happens when we hear or sing a favorite hymn or song? We don't just listen to the tune, or hear the touching, profound words. We feel it, we are caught up into the spirit of it. If it's familiar, we remember it fondly; if it is new, it strikes we say, "a chord" in us.

We recognize the Risen Lord's activity in our lives, because we feel His love for us. His love for us is there and is strong enough to overcome even death itself. It is always there, even when we are too busy, too hurt, too careless to remember. But He always remembers.

Every twist and turn of your life is under the loving and watchfulness of Christ. He is there to rejoice with us or to weep with us. He sends his Spirit to strengthen us, to guide us in our waking and sleeping. Divine Love calls us to prayer, even gives us the words to say.

It is for us that He died, it is for us that he was raised, that we might become truly everything possible that we were made to be by God.

When Mary encountered Jesus, He called her by name. She recognized Him when she heard again the sound that she had known before. Being addressed intimately, personally... what a wondrous thing. Think what it would be like to hear again the tender words of one you loved who is no more.

Dear Friends, life's sorrows will come, but we must never let tears blind our eyes to glory; and we must never fix our eyes on the pain, suffering, even death and forget the joys of heaven Jesus promises. Because.....

Christ is Risen. Alleluia, Alleluia.  
He is Risen indeed. Alleluia, Alleluia.