

EASTER 2017
SERMON – SAINT JOSEPH PARISH
FATHER JOHN ALTBERG
JOHN 20.1

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Furtively she races through the still, darkened streets of Jerusalem...Mary Magdalene is on a salvage mission...though risky, Jesus has to have a proper burial...she is committed to rescue Friday's hasty 'disposal'...Passover now ended...it's the first day of the week...the city will soon awaken...it will become more dangerous...

She darts from place to place...finds the cemetery...locates the tomb marked "Joseph from Arimathea" ...the entrance stone is NOT where it should be...she panics..."Oh No"...her heart pounds as she looks in...

A few minutes later she pounds on the door..."This is where I think Peter said he would be...I hope this is the right place..."

Peter, terrified that it's the Roman Police, opens the door a crack...Mary bursts in...she's talking fast..."I saw Him...he's alive"...Andrew is now standing behind his brother..."Mary, just slow down, what **are** you talking about"... "I'll tell you what I'm talking about, I went to the tomb just like I promised and he wasn't in it...the cloth was there but he was gone...then he showed up outside...**ALIVE**...he talked to me..."

"Mary, get a hold of yourself...you saw Jesus killed on Friday...you've got to calm down...you're imagining things." "I am NOT imagining anything...I saw him dead on Friday and I saw him alive just now..." "Uh huh, and he talked to you...just what did he say...?"

"Well I'll tell you what he said...he said go and find you and tell you he's alive...just like he said would happen...he is **NOT DEAD**..." "Mary, Mary this is all some mistake...or trick...or...I don't know...something..."

"By the way, just where were you guys yesterday...where is Thomas...?...I think I saw him on the street Friday...and what are you planning NOW...?" "Uh...well...fishing...we need to get out of here" "I don't think

so...you come with me..." They went...they saw...

The Resurrection is the most perplexing events of Christianity...we can readily imagine the events leading TO Easter...in fact we recreated them liturgically all during Holy Week...but **NOTHING** we can experience or re-create matches Easter...Imagine this...the thing we want most – know to be utterly impossible, actually comes true!

Because it is so difficult to comprehend, secular signs and symbols appear at Easter... **NOT** just commercialization...rabbits and painted eggs **ARE** Good News...though we don't find them in the Gospels, they provide a teaching opportunity about Easter... manifestations of renewed life developed as teaching tools in the Anglo-Saxon era. In the Eastern Church evolved one of the highest art forms, the Russian Easter Egg...created not for an art contest but to express the incredible nature of the event of highest importance.

Stunned were those closest to Jesus. Friday's ultimate Passover sacrifice...is alive...despair went from disbelief to incomprehensible amazement!

Later that day they meet again...locked away to figure out next steps. They were terrified...word was likely getting around town. Suddenly...Jesus just shows up and says "Peace be with you"...in the vernacular...calm down, pull yourselves together, I told you I would be back!

At the early Mass today we entered the church – just as Mary Magdalene entered the tomb - in darkness, lighted a fire, chanted *Lumen Christi* (The Light of Christ) then blessed and lighted the Paschal Candle, the rest of the candles and then the whole church. In the way we symbolized Jesus' return from the darkness of death and now brings light to our path and a way out of our own darkness.

Jesus promised he would come back...he made good on his word...the Rescue Mission renewed and ongoing...**we never close...Alleluia...!**

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