

EASTER 2019
SERMON – SAINT JOSEPH PARISH
FATHER CRAIG LOONEY
ST. JOHN 20.1-9

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Imagine what it would be like to go to the cemetery to visit our parents' graves...only to find them open and empty. What would we think? We might conclude someone had stolen their bodies...or at least relocated them without our knowledge. That explanation might make sense.

It's not hard for us to understand Mary Magdalene's confusion as she approached Jesus' grave. Mary was one of three women who stood by the cross on the first Good Friday and watched Jesus die. Now she and the other women have come to anoint his body. What she expected to find was a dead Jesus.

Along comes Jesus...but Mary doesn't recognize him. She thinks he is the gardener. She is upset and thinks someone has taken Jesus' body. Her tears are preventing her from clearly seeing who is standing in front of her. She is still reeling from what she saw three days earlier.

Don't we at times find ourselves moved to tears when we watch an especially heart-tugging movie on TV or read a compelling true story in a book. Perhaps we are moved to the point we have trouble clearly focusing on the images on the screen or the words in the book.

Mary Magdalene wasn't expecting to find a resurrected Jesus...neither are we. We all get the crucifixion...Jesus gets tortured and humiliated and dies. We don't get the resurrection...because we aren't expecting it...and because it defies rational explanation. It doesn't make sense.

It's at the point the resurrection of Jesus doesn't make sense we are beginning to understand it really does make sense...it's the completion of the *Divine Reversal* that began on Good Friday. The darkness of death is transformed into light and life...the Light of Christ has conquered sin and death once and for all.

Mary Magdalene only knew it was Jesus when he called her by name..."Mary". Her sorrow disappears and is immediately turned into glad surprise...a surprise she wasn't expecting to experience...and it was a surprise she was told not to keep to herself. Jesus told Mary to go tell the others he is back...he has kept his promise he would be raised from death just as he said he would.

Our liturgical reenactments of Holy Week have lead us from the high of Palm Sunday when we proclaimed Jesus our King...to the stark contrasts of Maundy Thursday's celebration of Jesus' gift of himself in the Sacrament of his Body and Blood and ending with the stripping of the Altar and a darkened church...to the somber events of Good Friday that saw Jesus die and get put in his grave.

Jesus didn't stay dead and neither will we. In the Easter Canticle we joyfully proclaim that Christ has been raised from death and that his raising from death is the guarantee after we die we too will be raised...in resurrected bodies.

Mary and the disciples believed it was really Jesus they saw and not an apparition because his body still bore the wounds of the crucifixion...and they could touch him. We believe in the resurrection of Jesus because of the testimonies of Mary Magdalene and the others who saw it first-hand.

In the Apostles' Creed we confess our belief in the resurrection of the body...not a disembodied spirit. The belief in the resurrection of Jesus in a recognizable body and of our own resurrections in recognizable bodies is a fundamental tenet of our faith. We can only imagine what our resurrected bodies will be like.

Like Mary Magdalene we aren't supposed to keep the resurrection of Jesus to ourselves. When we greet each other after Mass remember to do so with these words: *Alleluia! The Lord is risen! He is risen, indeed! Alleluia!*

Then let's go and tell others!

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