

Easter 2023
Sermon – Saint Joseph Parish
Father Craig Looney
St. John 20.1-9

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“Guess who’s back?”...That’s the motto on a tee shirt from a Christian art store that specializes in Saint and Jesus themed shirts, socks and coffee mugs. Many of the tee shirts are humorous...they get the message out...it’s an effective and imaginative way to evangelize.

Easter is about getting the message out...“The Lord is risen...He is risen indeed.” That’s not what Jesus’ friends were expecting...as they waited locked behind closed doors for what was to happen next.

The Resurrection of Jesus defies rational explanation...and that’s the point...we believe in the Resurrection because our faith compels us to believe. We believe Jesus rose from the dead because we believe the eyewitness accounts of Jesus’ appearance after the Resurrection are true...not made up stories. We do have an advantage over Jesus’ friends...we know how the story ultimately turns out.

Let’s return to the day of the Resurrection. John tells us in the Gospel reading...on Sunday morning Mary Magdalene went to the cemetery and found Jesus’ grave empty. This is not something she expected to find...she ran back to tell the rest of Jesus’ friends. Peter and John raced to the gravesite...John tells us he got there first. His other friends were right behind them.

What they saw was an empty grave! Where was Jesus body? Had someone taken it away? They still weren’t

looking for a risen Jesus. They didn’t understand or remember what Jesus told them. They went back to their own homes, confused, frightened and uncertain about what to do next.

If we read a little further in John’s Gospel...he tells us Mary Magdalene stayed behind...at the grave. Jesus appeared to her first...before he appeared to his other friends. Mary is crying and think Jesus us the caretaker. “Stop crying”, Jesus says. He calls her by name...“Mary”. He tells her not to be afraid...he has come back from the dead just as he said he would.

Later the same day Jesus’ friends had gathered together again behind locked doors to comfort and support each other and try to make sense of everything that happened over the past several days. Then they got a surprise they were not expecting. Jesus appeared to them...and he came through the locked door. They were startled and didn’t say anything. Jesus told them not to be afraid.

“Guess who’s back?”...How will we respond to Jesus’ surprising return from the dead? We spread the Good News to each other and all who will listen...

...“*Alleuia. The Lord is risen.*”

“*He is risen indeed. Alleuia!*”

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