



April 12, 2020 EASTER Sunday. Jn. 20: 1-9. Acts 10:34a, 37-43

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ENTERING THE SCENE:

Years ago, when Fr. Beck published a weekly column in the diocesan newspaper, he would often hide portions of the logo he designed for me in his drawings. Then he would wait to see how long it would take for me to discover it and call him. It set me to thinking that we are like the people peering into the tomb, apparently unaware of the new sprig of growth right before our eyes. We can miss the new that is happening, because we are focused on what has happened (burial cloths). Are there any "burial cloths" that we are concentrating on, at the expense of the newly sprouting sprigs of green in your faith life? If so, what are they? Do they represent hopes and ideas that WE thought were the best for us, and the sprigs represent what GOD knows are best for us? As you take time to be with this text again, let your mind and spirit wander out into the newly sprouting green in

John 20 1-9

1 **Early** on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, **Mary Magdalene** went to the **tomb** and saw that the **stone** had been removed from the entrance. 2 So she came **running** to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, "They have taken the Lord out of the **tomb**, and we don't know where they have put him!" 3 So Peter and the other disciple started for the **tomb**. 4 Both were **running**, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the **tomb** first. 5 He bent over and looked in at the **strips of linen** lying there but did not go in. 6 Then Simon Peter, who was behind him, arrived and went into the **tomb**. He saw the **strips of linen** lying there, 7 as well as the **burial cloth** that had been around Jesus' head. The **cloth** was folded up by itself, separate from the **linen**. 8 Finally the other disciple, who had reached the **tomb** first, also went inside. He saw and **believed**. 9 (They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.) (*Revised Common Lectionary continues*) 10 Then the disciples went back to their homes, 11 but **Mary** stood outside the tomb **crying**. As she **wept**, she bent over to look into the **tomb** 12 and saw two **angels** in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the **head** and the other at the **foot**. 13 They asked her, "Woman, why are you **crying**?" "They have taken my Lord away," she said, "and I don't know where they have put him." 14 At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus. 15 **Woman**," he said, "why are you **crying**? Who is it you are looking for?" Thinking he was the **gardener**, she said, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him." 16 Jesus said to her, "**Mary**." She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, "**Rabboni!**" (which means Teacher). 17 Jesus said, "Do not **hold** on to me, for I have not yet returned to the Father. Go instead to my **brothers** and tell them, 'I am returning to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" 18 **Mary Magdalene** went to the disciples with the news: "I have seen the **Lord!**" And she told them that he had said these things to her.

DISCUSSION QUESTION: Mary went to the tomb to weep and pray. The disciples raced to the tomb to check out her story. What are you going to the tomb for this Easter? (Jn. 20: 1-18)

PRAYER: EARLY APRIL EASTER

We are saved, we just don't feel it yet. /Anxiously we study lawn and garden / rejoicing in the sparse occasional blooms / while dead leaves linger to be raked. / The mighty oaks condescend not / to early leaf, unbending in their patience. / But forsythias of blinding gold / bend and beckon their hosannas, / generous, profligate their blessed sprays. / Wait no longer, proclaim it now! / The earth awakens, the empty tomb / makes believers of us all. Amen

Helen Fitzgerald NCR 8/13/99

WORD STUDY AND QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

EARLY: To be out and about before light would have been a risky thing for anyone, especially a woman alone. The long night of grieving and waiting must have been torture for this woman who loved Jesus so much.

Have you ever spent a night in agony, waiting for the dawn, when you could begin to do something you desperately wanted to do? How 'long' was that night? What do you remember feeling? Thinking?

MARY MAGDALENE: Women in Jesus' day were not allowed to study the scriptures. So Mary only knew the man Jesus; loved the man Jesus. John makes an issue of pointing out that certain people loved Jesus, or were loved by him.

Why do you think John does this? Could the quality of the love relationship with Jesus, uncomplicated by messianic expectations, be a critical factor in someone's ability to really "see" who he was? Have you ever not recognized someone because your expectation clouded your vision?



TOMB: A convicted criminal in Jesus' day was not to be buried, but to have the body thrown in the town dump. The fact that Jesus was in a tomb could have enraged some, and an open tomb could suggest that someone corrected the problem by stealing the body and making it 'right'.

If you were Mary, do you think that might have been one of the possibilities racing through your mind as you saw the stone rolled away? Is there anything in Chapter 20 that helps you understand Mary's frame of mind? Is there any hint she expected Jesus to rise from the dead?

STONE: A huge round stone was the customary seal for a tomb. It would have required several people to move it.

If you were a mourner and had come to a gravesite, only to find it an open hole, what do you think you would feel or think? Even with Jesus' resurrection as a precedent, would you immediately leap to the conclusion that your person had been raised from the dead?



RUNNING: With more adrenaline than sense, the disciple's race to the tomb.

What do you think they expected to find? Is there anything in this chapter that helps you answer this question? What is it?

STRIPS OF LINEN / LINEN: A retreating army often arranged their camp so as to look like they were simply off doing something else, and would be back later. John makes a special point of mentioning that the strips of linen, used to bind up the head, was lying neatly rolled up separate from the burial cloth that wrapped the body.

How does knowing this tactic help you to "see" more in this text? What do the disciples make of this scene?

BURIAL CLOTH / CLOTH: Whatever happened in that tomb obviously did not happen suddenly or violently. No grave robber would unwrap a decaying body before stealing it. We get no account of what Peter made of this evidence. All those predictions of resurrection seem to be far from his mind. The other disciple (probably John) seems to have a beginning insight into something, but we are immediately told, that they did not understand that Jesus was to rise from the dead.

What do you think happened in that tomb? What do you feel happened? How do thinking and feeling differ in what conclusion you might have?

BELIEVED: In the ancient Mediterranean world, believing in or having faith in someone primarily describes loyalty and commitment to another person rather than our modern understanding of faith: it was the social glue that held people together, rather than our idea of assent to a truth.

Does knowing this help you understand what John might have been saying in verse 8? What does this tell you about the other disciples (probably John's) reaction to what he saw?

CRYING / WEPT: Mary is back at the tomb crying. Her loss is now compounded as she has the agony of losing even the body, with all that might mean.

Why do you think she went back to the tomb? What does that suggest about her relationship with Jesus?

ANGELS: For the first time, Mary stoops to look in the tomb and she sees the angels. Angels are messengers of God in the bible who often help people see from a new "angle". They usually bring news or challenges from God.

What effect does the angels question have on Mary? What does her answer tell you about her state of mind?

HEAD / FOOT: The angels seem to act as 'bookends' to the place where Jesus' body had been placed.

What do you think John wanted us to know by giving us this piece of information?

WOMAN: Jesus calls his mother ‘woman’ as he hung on the cross, and now he uses this same term for Mary.
Does this seem strange to you? What do you think he was doing by using this term rather than their names?

GARDENER: In those days, a person who was a minister who sidelined as a gravedigger was called a fossarian. Mary obviously does not expect what she is to find.
What is keeping her from seeing who is right in front of her?

MARY: It is not until Jesus says her name that Mary recognizes who it is.
What happened, that she now is able to see who Jesus is? Could it be that only Jesus said her name like that?

RABBONI: Mary now calls Jesus teacher.
What has she learned?

HOLD: Mary is now told not to ‘hold’ on to her expectations of Jesus. It will never be like it was before. She must leave and tell the others what she has learned.
What has the total unconditional love of God in the resurrected Christ, taught you about the God who raised Jesus? Do you, like Mary, now have the task to share that consciousness with others?

BROTHERS: Jesus calls the disciples brothers. Their failure to stay faithful to him before his death has not changed the way he loved them or his vision for them.
Have you accepted that God loves you like that also? If not, why?

LORD: Mary now calls Jesus Lord. He has moved from being teacher to being Lord.
Has Jesus moved from being a teacher to being Lord for you? How does this account of the Resurrection help you to move to Jesus being Lord?

PARALLEL TEXTS: Jn. 20:1-18// Mt. 28:1-10; Mk. 16:1-11; Lk. 24:1-11; Jn. 19:25; **Jn. 20:6**// Lk. 24:12; Jn. 20:7// Jn. 11:44, 19, 40; Jn. 20:9// Acts 2:26f; 1 Cor. 15:4; Jn. 20:14// Jn. 21:4; Lk. 24:16; Jn. 20:15ff// Mt. 28: 9f; Jn. 20:17// Acts 1:9; Ruth 1:16;

OTHER TEXTS OF THE WEEK: Acts 10: 34, 37-43; Ps. 118: 1-2, 16-17, 22-23; Col. 3: 1-4; Jn. 20: 1-9; Revised Common Lectionary: Acts 10:34-43; Ps. 118: 1-2, 14-24; 1 Cor. 15: 1-11; Jn. 20:1-18;

SUPPORTIVE INFORMATION:

History does not provide us with the meaning of the resurrection; rather: the resurrection gives us the meaning of history.
Donald Goergen, O. P.

"As the body must be born after completing its development in the womb, so a soul, when it has reached the limit of life in the body allotted it by God, must leave the body." - St. Anthony the Great –

Jesus' resurrection makes it impossible for the human story to end in chaos - it has to move inexorably towards light, towards life, towards love. - Carlo Carretto

In bearing witness to what happened, the apostles did not simply narrate a past event, as one might, for example, tell others about having seen with one's own eyes the Rose Bowl Parade on New Year's day. What was seen and handed on to others was the Word of Life who was with God in the beginning. Though the word of Life had existed prior to the Incarnation, it was only when he took on our nature that we could “see” the Word and “behold” his glory. In the church's language the word for this kind of seeing, this kind of knowing, is faith. Without faith there is no seeing and hence no genuine knowledge of God. Pg. 178. Wilken, Robert L. [The Spirit of Early Christian Thought](#). London. Yale Univ. Press. 2003.

Out of the certainty of the Resurrection of Jesus there springs the early Church's certitude that the Risen One is the goal of the universe, that he is the One toward whom everything has been created. Pg. 137. Schonbon, Cardinal Christoph. [Chance or Purpose](#). San Francisco. Ignatius Press. 2007.

GOSPEL OF PETER: XII. 50—XIII. 57 [50]. Now early on the Lord's day Mary Magdalene, a disciple of the Lord – who was afraid because of the Jews, for they were inflamed with anger and had not done at the tomb of the Lord the things which women usually do to their loved ones when they die—[51] took friends with her, and came to the tomb where he was laid. [52] And they feared lest the Jews see them, and said, “Even if we were not able to weep and lament him on the day on which he was

crucified, yet let us now do so at his tomb. [53] but who will roll away the stone for us that is set against the door of the tomb, that we may enter and sit beside him and perform our obligations?" [54] for the stone was large. "We fear lest some one see us. But if we cannot, then let us lay beside the door the things which we have brought in remembrance of him, and we will weep and lament until we get home." XIII [55] And they went and found the tomb open; and they went near and looked in there, and saw there a young man sitting in the middle of the tomb, handsome, and dressed in a brilliant robe. And he said to them, [56] "Why have you come? Whom do you seek? Not him who was crucified, for he has risen and gone. But if you do not believe it, Look in and see the place where he lay, that he is not here. For he has risen and gone to the place from which he was sent." [57] Then the women were afraid and fled.

In a book edited by Beatrice Bruteau, [Jesus Through Jewish Eyes](#), we have a series of articles written by Jewish authors who were asked to reflect on Jesus. One contributor, Michael Cook, in his chapter "Evolving Jewish Views of Jesus", reports that there were many explanations for the empty tomb. One was that a gardener professed to re-bury Jesus in his own garden, fearing that the disciples would come and take the body to then claim that Jesus was resurrected. Pg. 18.

Bruteau, Beatrice. [Jesus Through Jewish Eyes](#). Maryknoll, NY. Orbis Books. 2001.

The Resurrection is not just a new state of being. It is a new presence, an interpresence of us and God. "He is risen, He is not here," Affirms that he is not in the tomb. It is only the beginning of the message. "He is risen, he is not here in the tomb," but where is he? Faith in the resurrection is the answer, and the faith answer is "Here I am." To believe "in his name" is to assume his identity with the confidence that the believer is the living presence of (that is) the Risen One. We are the real body and the only body that is the resurrection presence to the point that the resurrection is what we are no more and no less.

From the beginning, there have been real believers in the resurrection. The spirit has not failed and never will. Faith is always beautiful. Christian faith always achieves resurrection presence with others with God. While the faith has been good, the theology has been poor and this has been compounded in a culture that has insisted that theological conclusions are the object of faith. Our theology of resurrection has been so poor and unsatisfying that we had to look elsewhere for the "real presence." We contrived a "real substantial" presence under "the appearances" of bread and wine in a ritual. But in spite of the poor theology, we have believed well and have found that God's real presence is in those who believe in him. God's presence to us and ours to him is the resurrection. The people who are this living reality are the living-body-presence. They don't need another presence to be present to. Parr, Raymond. [Process Person Presence](#). Thomas More Press, Chicago. 1990. Pages 139-140.

Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again." The text continues: "Then they *remembered* his [Jesus'] words, and returning from the tomb they told all this to the eleven and to all the rest." Notice the repetition of the word "remember": The author is here telling us that the women had, when Jesus was still alive, received private teaching from him about his coming death and resurrection. It was not just the twelve who were taught this at Caesarea Philippi, as we might have assumed based on Lk. 9: 18-27 alone. The men apparently thought that the women's tale of a risen Jesus was nonsense, "an idle tale," and "they did not believe them" Lk. 24:11. This is not surprising; women in this culture were generally considered too emotional to be valid witnesses. For this reason, it is all the more striking that women were the key witnesses to the heart of the later Christian creed, that they were last at the cross, first at the tomb, first to hear the Easter message, first to proclaim it and first to see the risen Lord.

Witherington, Ben III. Joanna: Apostle of the Lord – or Jailbait? Bible Review. Spring 2005. Pgs. 12ff.

The resurrection is the victory of companionship over abandonment, the victory of community over estrangement.

Roberto Goizueta

Our Lord has written the promise of the resurrection not in words alone, but in every leaf in springtime. - Martin Luther

"Easter says you can put truth in a grave, but it won't stay there." - Clarence W. Hall

The woman who sought spiritual counsel from me claimed that she did not believe in the resurrection but, by almost all indicators, she lived her life in function of it. Her problem was only that her imagination could not picture it. Like all of us, she suffers the poverty of a finite imagination trying to picture the infinite. But God cannot be pictured and so a weak imagination isn't the same thing as a weak faith. [Fr. Ron Rolheiser](#)

SELECTED READINGS:

Links to all the books mentioned in this guide are on The Ark web site: www.theark1.com

Beck, Robert. Sunday Homilies: Cycle B 2007. Pgs. 83-85. To order contact [Carol Oberfoell](#)

Wiederkehr, Macrina, OSB. [A Tree Full of Angels](#). Harper & Row. San Francisco. **AN ANGEL IN YOUR HEART**: Pg. 81.

Sumwalt, John E. [Forty Tellable Tales for Cycle A](#). C.S.S. Pub. Co. Inc. Lima, Ohio. 1992. Pages 67-71.

Shea, John. [Stories of Faith](#). Thomas More Press, Chicago. 1980. **ECCLESIASTES**: Pages 216-218

Janice Grana. Ed. [Images](#) St. Mary's College Press, Winona MN 1976. **HE COMES**: Page 32.

Wiederkehr, Macrina, OSB. [Seasons of Your Heart](#). Silver Burdett Co, Morristown, NJ. 1979. **RACING TO THE TOMB**: Pages 98-99