



April 4, 2021 Jn. 20: 1-9. Acts. 10:34a, 37-43

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Additional [Beck](#) (Choose this week's column)

Stone, Naomi. [Upon Awakening](#)

Rolheiser, Fr. Ron. [God as Redeemer, Not as a Rescuer](#)

Additional [Resources](#) Trending Today

[Monastery Sunday Homilies](#) (right click & open)

[Youtube link](#) (Good for the rest of John's gospel)

ENTERING THE SCENE:

With all that is happening these days, a lot of people will be going to tombs: tombs of people dying before their times. Many are living in the "darkness" as they await what the next drone brings or the next shocking video on the nightly news. . We need the promise of the Resurrection more than ever this Easter. But we also need to enter into the way that Jesus took on the "evil" of his day. The disciples huddled in fear now rush out to see what Mary has proclaimed. Only John seems to intuit that something very new has happened. Take some time now to be with John as he ponders what might be going on here. Do we also need to look at

things in a new way? How can this terrible time be transformed into a new beginning for our world?

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.)

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: 9)

PRAYER: Dear Mary of Madala, I only wish that I could have accompanied you that early dawn on that first Easter day. So often when someone I love has died I think they are gone forever. My grief and teary eyes keep me from being able to see in faith that death has once and for all been overcome. Be with me as I learn to love like you loved, so that I can be for others a source of good news like you were when you returned with your beaming face of joy. Amen.

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?

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.

A biblical sense of the [resurrection of the dead](#) should focus on the indomitable power and faithfulness of God in the face of every negation, including the ultimate negation of death

"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.

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.

We will be as unique in the resurrection as we are in our mortal bodies, because God, who loves each of us in our individuality, will give us bodies in which our most unique relationship with God will gloriously shine. Henri Nouwen
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 of Jesus was a hidden event. Jesus didn't rise from the grave to baffle his opponents, to make a victory statement, or to prove to those who crucified him that he was right after all. Jesus rose as a sign to those who had loved him and followed him that God's divine love is stronger than death. To the women and men who had committed themselves to him, he revealed that his mission had been fulfilled. To those who shared in his ministry, he gave the sacred task to call all people into the new life with him. The world didn't take notice. Only those whom he called by name, with whom he broke bread, and to whom he spoke words of peace were aware of what happened. Still, it was this hidden event that freed humanity from the shackles of death. Henri Nouwen

The resurrection of the body means that what we have lived in the body will not go to waste but will be lifted in our eternal life with God. As Christ bears the marks of his suffering in his risen body, our bodies in the resurrection will bear the marks of our suffering. Our wounds will become signs of glory in the resurrection. Henri Nouwen

"The meaning of the resurrection is that the event of Jesus' life--the action and activity of his life--continues in the moving present of today for what it was in Jesus' life on earth. The resurrection of Jesus and the gift of the Spirit mean that Jesus' life has not ended as an ongoing event in the world; they mean that Jesus is always newly coming to us offering the total dependence on God of his life to us." Arthur A. Vogel, *Radical Christianity and the Flesh of Jesus*

"Easter was when Hope in person surprised the whole world by coming forward from the future into the present."
— N. T. Wright

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

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](#)

Beck, Robert. Sunday Homilies: Cycle B 2012. Pgs. 61-62. 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