



WEEKLY GOSPEL REFLECTION



Easter Sunday, Cycle C

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Jesus said to her, "Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father."

This passage recounts the stark discovery of the empty tomb by Mary Magdalene. The empty tomb is the first indication of the resurrection, though it does not make everything clear. It took time for the disciples to grasp fully the significance of what they saw. This is also an indication that our own encounter with the risen Lord is not in our providence, but rather a gift to be cherished. But this tomb gives us insights into the resurrection. First, the tomb is in a garden, and second no one had ever been laid into it. In Genesis 3:22-24 God commands, *"He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take from the tree of life and eat, and live forever."* While the antidote to the tree of death is in the Garden, an angel keeps guard to turn away trespassers, until Jesus' death. He is the one that has been laid in this virgin tomb, and he is the first to be given the fruit by these guardian angels. Jesus eats from the Tree of Life and lives forever.

Mary Magdalene discovers that the tomb is open. She runs off to tell Peter and the beloved disciple, and they race to the tomb to check out her story. The beloved disciple arrives but allows Peter to go in first not only as a sign of respect, but also to give emphasis that this tomb, set in the Garden, is entry into paradise, and Peter is the Keeper of the Keys to Heavenly Paradise (Matt 16:19.) They find that the body is gone and only the wrappings remain. For the beloved disciple, who is the forbearer of this truth to be carried by all disciples, that is enough; he sees and believes.

The cloth from the head being rolled up indicates that this is not a case of grave robbers. In fact, this harkens back to Genesis when God tells Adam and Eve, *"By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread until you return to the ground."* (Genesis 3:19) The curse of work is directly related to the fate of death, and a face veil connects both. The worker uses a "veil" to wipe his brow; the dead are covered with a veil. But Jesus has no need for either now. It is discarded and left behind.

The text continues with the meeting between Mary Magdalene and Jesus. It is a beautiful and touching account. Mary is weeping as she sees two angels; she still thinks that someone has taken the body of Jesus. Then she sees him, although she does not recognize him until he speaks her name. Jesus then tells her, *"Mary do not hold on to me,"* and sends her to the disciples as the first evangelist of the Good News of the Resurrection.

This eye witness account is told with great detail. Sit in quietude with the Holy Spirit and reflect vividly on it. Easter is a time to reflect on the mingling of love and mystery. Contemplate this gift that the Holy Spirit has given you. Become attentive, open to the spirit, and filled with wonder and awe. May Easter be for you what it was for Mary Magdalene, a new Son-Rise, a new day of joy poured out to family, community and the world!

A reading from the Holy Gospel according to John.

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark,
Mary Magdalene came to the tomb
and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb.
So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple,
the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them,

*"They have taken the Lord out of the tomb,
and we do not know where they have laid him."*

Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb.

The two were running together,
but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first .
He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in.
Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb.
He saw the linen wrappings lying there, and the cloth that had been on Jesus' head,
not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself.
Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed;
for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead.
Then the disciples returned to their homes.

But Mary Magdalene stood weeping outside the tomb.
As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb;
and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying,
one at the head and the other at the feet.

They said to her,

"Woman, why are you weeping!"

She said to them,

"They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him."

When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there,
but she did not know that it was Jesus.

Jesus said to her,

*"Woman, why are you weeping!
Whom are you looking for?"*

Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him,

*"Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him,
and I will take him away."*

Jesus said to her, *"Mary!"*

She turned and said to him in Hebrew, *"Rabbouni!"* which means Teacher.

Jesus said to her,

*"Do not hold on to me,
because I have not yet ascended to the Father.
But go to my brothers and say to them,
'I am ascending to my Father and your Father,
to my God and your God.'"*

Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples,

"I have seen the Lord,"

and she told them that he had said these things to her.