

LOOKING AT LIFE THROUGH THE LENS OF THE GOSPEL



EASTER SUNDAY

5th April 2026

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John 20:1 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. ² 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.” ³ Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. ⁴ The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. ⁵ He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. ⁶ Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, ⁷ and the cloth that had been on Jesus’ head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. ⁸ Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; ⁹ for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead. ¹⁰ Then the disciples returned to their homes.

John 20:11 *But Mary stood outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb: ¹²and 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. ¹³They 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.” ¹⁴When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. ¹⁵Jesus 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.” ¹⁶Jesus said to her, “Mary!” She turned and said to him in Hebrew, “Rabbouni!” (which means Teacher). ¹⁷Jesus 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.’” ¹⁸Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, “I have seen the Lord”; and she told them that he had said these things to her.*

POINTERS FOR PRAYER

In some ways this gospel is a difficult one for prayer. It only presents a part of the story and the full unfolding of the good news the story contains lies in the next part of the text. However, even with this section there is plenty of material for reflection and for prayer.

1. The disciples are in a state of shock and suffering from a traumatic loss. Jesus, the one in whom they had placed so much hope, has been murdered and buried. Then, before they have time to recover comes another shock - the body of Jesus is missing. In the past year we have had shock after shock during the coronavirus crisis. What was that like for you? How did you cope? What, or who, sustained you then?
2. Mary and Peter, and possibly others, came and discovered that the tomb was empty. The part of the story we have in this text gives no explanations of what has happened. They are left in a state of bewilderment “for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead.” Have you been in that kind of a situation, faced with events you cannot explain, possibly events which have dashed your hopes in another person, or in God? What has that been like for you?
3. Yet in spite of the lack of explanation, the beloved disciple “saw and believed”. Have there been times when others have done something that you could not understand, and which they could not explain at the time and yet you believed that all was not as it seemed? times when you decided to trust in spite of the evidence? Have there been times when others have shown this kind of faith in you when you were not able to offer satisfactory explanations, and all you could say was “trust me”? Have there been times in your relationship with God when you have felt that you were faced with an empty tomb and still you believed?

JOHN BYRNE OSA—Intercom

The account of the first Easter Sunday morning is significant in that it highlights how each of us believers must come to terms with the mystery of the resurrection. Mary reports to Peter and the beloved disciple that the tomb is empty. They in turn run to investigate and, while the disciple reached the tomb first, he holds back in deference to Peter, the leader of the twelve. It is only when the beloved disciple enters the tomb that we are told an appropriate response to the event: "he saw and he believed". The beloved disciple is unnamed, but in John's gospel he is present and close to Jesus at the key moments: the Last Supper, Calvary and now the tomb. In a sense he symbolises where all true believers should be, for each of us is called to be a beloved disciple who accompanies Jesus on his way. "Where I am there also my servant shall be" Jn 12.26. The evangelist then makes a comment on the scene he has described by saying "Until now they had not understood the teaching of the scripture that he must rise from the dead." It is clear that the first disciples were not expecting the events of Easter; they were taken by surprise and then had to make sense of it. One of the key ways of doing this was to revisit the scriptures, the Old Testament, and pray about how God had been faithful to his people throughout their history. Now, through the Easter story, we have reached the highest expression of that faithfulness "This day was made by the Lord. We rejoice and are glad.

Reflection

Our readings today bring home to us with tremendous enthusiasm and fervour how our faith life is meaningless if not rooted in the resurrection of Jesus. The gospel is not merely a story in which we are offered the good example of a man who lived a life of love. It is much more, for it shows that God has renewed our life totally from within through the Spirit of the Risen Christ who now lives in us. This is our Easter faith so let's sing Alleluia with a full heart and voice today!

SEAN GOAN - *Let the Reader Understand*

It is odd that Mary seems to be absent during vv. 3-10 and that the disciples, whom she alerted, evidently ignore her. It is odd that we are not told she came back with them although we discover she did. It is odd that the beloved disciple and Peter simply "went back to their homes"—to do what exactly? These unusual features become tolerable once we realise we are dealing a core tradition symbolically expanded, by the genius who wrote the Fourth Gospel, for didactic and theological purposes.

A component of the Gospel writer's objective here is to recount how we come to resurrection faith. This Gospel brings something very special for our consideration. Earlier, in John 11, we read that the gift of resurrected life flows from the love of God or the Son of God's distress at the human condition ("Jesus wept"). Correspondingly, the double story here tells us that the move to Easter faith is also a movement of love. The eyes of faith are opened by the heart. Such an analysis explains both the structure of the passage and the oddity of it.

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John's account of the resurrection is in two stages:

- verses 1-2 are about Mary of Magdala's experience;
- verses 3 to 10 tell us about the experience of the two disciples.

In verses 1 and 2 you might like to focus on the symbolism of it being "still dark" and yet a "first day" of a new time. The large stone symbolises all the forces, human and other, that keep God's grace in the bondage of the tomb.

Your experience will help you interpret how Mary responded. Did she run in confusion? Or in fear?

The story of Peter and the disciple whom Jesus loved can be read from various points of view. You can take them together as experiencing the resurrection, focusing on the details, especially the cloths lying on the ground, useless now since Jesus was alive, but also on the fact that until they saw the empty tomb they did not believe the teaching of the scriptures.

St John makes a point of contrasting the two apostles. If you would like to meditate on this aspect of the story, see Peter as symbol of the Church leader, while "the other disciple" is the one who, while having no position of authority, is specially loved by Jesus and, perhaps as a result, is first in faith.

MICHEL DE VERTEUIL—*Lectio Divina on the Sunday Gospels, Year B*

The empty tomb causes consternation. In John's account, Mary Magdalene, the first to arrive is confused by the missing stone. Peter and John see the empty tomb and wrappings, but appear not to understand. Only when John enters the tomb does he 'see and believe'. Mary Magdalene will be the first to see the risen Jesus, recognising him when he calls her by name. Later, Thomas will be convinced only when he sees and touches Jesus. The Good News dawns gradually for the disciples. We share their awe and excitement this morning. Jesus is alive! We enter into the mystery, allowing ourselves to believe and hope.

Think of a time when you were moved by a person or event, while perhaps not fully understanding why. Reflecting back, what insights are there? What did you learn?

With the world in chaos, it can be difficult to hope. The resurrection shows us that even the most desperate situations can be redeemed. Where do you see hope in the world?

TRÍONA DOHERTY & JANE MELETT— *Go Deeper*