

Reflection for Easter Sunday 2021

John 20; 1-18

Collect for Resurrection Sunday

God unlimited by mortal fear or tomb's cold grip: in the lingering dark give us grace to know your life triumphant, your love undimmed, in the face of Jesus Christ, the first born from the dead. Amen
(Prayers for an Inclusive Church)

In the Orthodox Church tradition, the Easter morning service begins with the priest saying out loud: "Jesus Christ is Risen" and all the congregation responds: "He is Risen indeed", but that is not how the narrative of this day begins. But how did the waiting on Saturday go for you?

The Gospel narrative begins "**while it is still dark**", and that is where we left the narrative last Friday – in darkness. And who is the one who dares walk in that darkness to the tomb? Mary Magdalene, and she see the tomb stone removed, and runs for her life. Not into the tomb to see, but to the gathered disciples – strangely this group of people have not dared to come out yet, and she brings news: the body of Jesus has been taken, and I don't know where he is. The first response to the event is based on fear, it is not based on reality.

With this Peter and the disciple loved by Jesus run to the tomb, and when they reach the tomb the first things that they see are the signs of death: "the linen wrappings lying there". The wrappings that covered the dead body. This day does not begin with the announcement of life, quite the contrary; it is only halfway through the reading that we read that one of the disciples sees and believes, even if they don't understand. And then we are told they returned to their homes. All this is quite an anti-climax if you ask me. Nothing so far for us to shout out "He is risen indeed".

So, shall we go home each to our own place now? Wait a moment, have you heard what I have just heard? Someone is crying outside the tomb. A woman. Isn't that Mary? No men around, but one woman has stayed, she is not willing to go home. She needs something else to happen. And as she looks into the tomb (still focused on death, not on life yet), she sees two angels and twice hears the question: "**Why are you crying?**". And she explains the obvious – I can't find the body I have come to pay my respect to. She doesn't even recognize that one of the questions comes from Jesus, whom we are told she does not recognize. She believes this figure is the gardener, who might be the one who has taken the body.

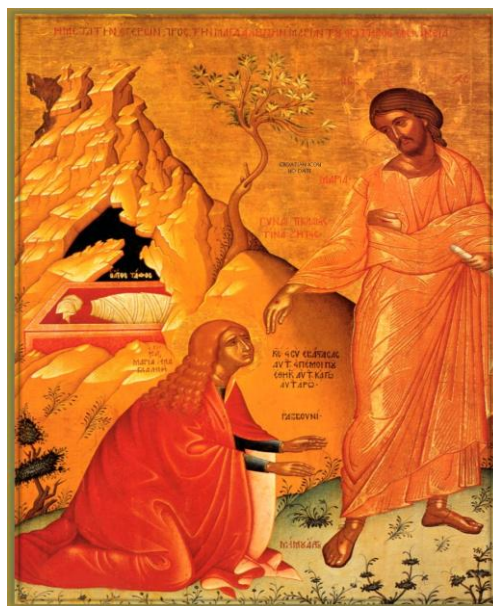
What changes the situation? Well, something that Jesus has done before. She is called by her name: **Mary**. And then she not only sees but she recognizes. As she shouts her recognition: **Master**, she tries to grab him, something like Peter wanting to build the huts on the hill of the transfiguration. After so much pain, she wants to grab the moment and never let go... and she is told not to. Jesus does something even more amazing, he tells her to **GO**, and tell the disciples what has happened – he is announcing the ascension to "my God and your God". And this way Mary becomes an apostle – the announcer of the Good News. The men that went back home, to the protection they longed for, hear Mary tell them "*I have seen the Lord*" and this is when and how the Resurrection suddenly becomes a reality, a reality that will change their lives and our lives.

We would have probably imagined something more amazing than this. But no – it is a very humble beginning, quite in line with Jesus’ ministry. The wonderful things that happened then often were played down – don’t tell yet. But now it does become to tell the news.

Interesting. Challenging. Different. When we read what Paul will write about this day – and Paul is the first one to write about this, Paul will never mention women at the tomb. And yet Mary is the central figure here. And it is Jesus calling her by her name that opens her ears, her eyes and her heart. This reminds us all that the Resurrection is a turning point in history, where nothing will ever be the same as it was before. And even when history has deprived us of this amazing reality, the truth will emerge. And that truth is that each one of us, all of us, should be inspiring each other to the fullness of life that we find in Jesus.

The day of Resurrection certainly does not begin in the way we would expect it to, but this suddenly changes. We can’t only think about the end of the day, we have to see the whole day, and only that way will be all become full participants of the great change that God has willed for life for all of us.

We should not try to tame or to domesticate this day, it is a truly powerful and transformative day which will continue in its effects for ever. The Resurrection of Jesus shows us what God has prepared for us all, and how we have all been called to play our part in this NEW way, this NEW life, this NEW hope. And ***this*** is the journey we are on – *Walking the way – living the life of Jesus today.* Amen



Icon – Mary and Resurrected Jesus

Join Zoom Meeting – Tuesday 6th April, 2.00 pm

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82183021506?pwd=Z2NxN1hRSzhRMzZwajFYRoNac3ZkZz09>

Meeting ID: 821 8302 1506

Passcode: 840245