

## REFLECTIONS FOR EASTER SUNDAY ~ 17 April 2022

### The Mount ~ The Residence at Littledale

“Resurrection has left footprints in the dew.” These words from the Scottish Minister, Roddy Hamilton, celebrate the good news of Easter morning, “He is risen.” The Gospel reading from today’s Liturgy of the Word speaks about the first encounter Jesus has in his new life – the meeting with Mary Magdalene in the garden.



The reading begins with the words, “Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark” (Jn 20:1) as Mary Magdalene comes to the tomb in the garden as soon as is acceptable after the Sabbath, the tomb near which she and her friends had waited after Jesus’ burial. Immediately, these words bring us back to the first creation story of Genesis which ended with God’s resting on the Sabbath (“the first day of the week”). She sees that the tomb is empty and runs to let the disciples know. Peter and the beloved disciple do not believe her, but they run back to the tomb and find that it is indeed empty. Mary remains behind after they go back home.

The presence of the garden and the angels in white brings us to the second creation story with the Garden of Eden, the rupture between God and Adam and Eve, and the presence of the cherubim to guard the Garden from which Adam and Eve were driven. The harmony of the first creation story and the intimacy between God and humanity in the second story have been lost. We now come to another garden, in the morning not the evening, to see two angels in white guarding the garden tomb. Jesus is present there and speaks his first words after the Resurrection, “Woman why are you weeping?” After Mary responds thinking Jesus to be the gardener, he simply calls her name, “Mary!” That alone convinces her that Jesus has risen. Jesus then sends her back once again to the disciples. We are told, “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” (Jn 20:18).

A new creation has dawned! The evening of the loss of right relationship between God and humanity has been restored in the morning of resurrection, reconciliation of that right relationship, announced to and believed by a woman. That woman, Mary Magdalene, becomes the first one to announce the good news of that new creation, of that restored relationship, of reconciliation.

Why Mary? Because she was there – she was there during the years of Jesus’ public ministry, she was there at the foot of the cross, she was there when he died and was buried in the tomb, and she was there immediately after he rose from the dead. She was truly a beloved and faithful disciple who wept for Jesus in his death and was the first to rejoice with him in his resurrection. [Jan Richardson](#) expresses so poignantly what Mary must have felt that morning



*The Three Marys at the Tomb*

Henry Ossawa Tanner

You hardly imagined standing here,  
 everything you ever loved suddenly returned to you,  
 looking you in the eye and calling your name.  
 And now you do not know  
 how to abide this hole in the center of your chest,  
 where a door slams shut  
 and swings open at the same time,  
 turning on the hinge of your aching and hopeful heart.  
 I tell you, this is not a banishment from the garden.  
 This is an invitation, a choice, a threshold, a gate.  
 This is your life calling to you  
 from a place you could never have dreamed,  
 but now that you have glimpsed its edge,  
 you cannot imagine choosing any other way.  
 So let the tears come as anointing, as consecration,  
 and then let them go.  
 Let this blessing gather itself around you.  
 Let it give you what you will need for this journey.  
 You will not remember the words—they do not matter.  
 All you need to remember is how it sounded  
 when you stood in the place of death  
 and heard the living call your name.

Easter is for all of us who are Christians a time to ritualize this pivotal moment in the life of creation, this moment of the dawning of a new creation. The two other faith traditions which share the same



roots as Christianity are also celebrating a new creation at this same time. This year, Judaism began Passover on April 15 (the time marking God's delivery of the people of Israel from slavery in Egypt and the beginning of their journey to the Promised Land), and Islam celebrates Ramadan from April 2 to May 1 (the anniversary of the month during which Muhammad received the initial revelations that would become the Quran). All three religious traditions are celebrating a moment of new life for their communities, very much linked with nature – for Christianity and Judaism, their feasts are

linked to the first full moon after the equinox; for Islam, their feast begins with the rise of the crescent moon.

But this Easter is more than simply ritualizing the memory of the beginning of this new time. It is a time for us to renew our commitment to live this new beginning, this new creation, in the midst of our life circumstances. [Roddy Hamilton](#) says it so well:

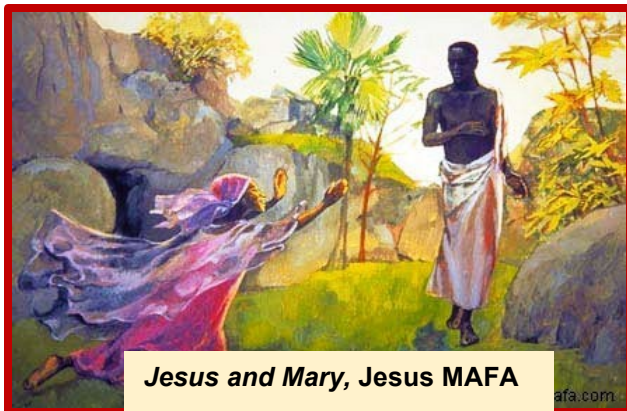


When it takes hold, resurrection doesn't let go,  
 it shakes the dead awake,  
 it shakes the darkness from the light,  
 it shakes the silence from our throats  
 and it wrestles death from all that is dying  
 Let us go out into the world  
 and in the upheaval of resurrection  
 seek out the life

How does the upheaval of resurrection make a difference in my life today? For each one of us, the answer to that question brings a unique response. Perhaps for one it means accepting the pain and suffering of my life right now in the knowledge that it has meaning in the context of Jesus' death and resurrection. For another, it may be simply calling another person by her name because she needs to know that she matters. For another, it may be journeying with persons who are poor and without a voice, helping them find their voice. For another, it may be leading in celebrations of life and of hope. For another, it may be caring for Earth, our common home, in multiple ways.

For a community, it may be praying together or reflecting together or planning ways to care for Earth or reaching out to persons who are in need. For our congregation, it may be daring new ways of supporting and strengthening our sponsored ministries or challenging the status quo of corporations by divesting of fossil fuels or supporting, with our resources, ministries being carried out by others who share our values. For all of us, it is creating pathways to inclusion, responding with radical hospitality, and welcoming the stranger in our midst. For all of us, it is about "mercy: imaging the face of God in all Creation."

Mary Magdalene was there – always present, never really knowing how much her presence meant, never even imagining what her presence would mean in God's unfolding plan. The upheaval of resurrection in my life means that, no matter what the circumstances or the challenges of my life, I am present. I am present with all my failings and my gifts, my vulnerabilities and my strengths, my hopes and my dreams. I am present.



**Jesus and Mary, Jesus MAFA**

Because I am present, Jesus the Christ will call my name and will lead me in ways that are life-giving and hope-filled. I am a child of the resurrection in an imperfect world marred by unjust war in the Ukraine, a pandemic that will not stop, atrocities in Syria and Afghanistan, church communities struggling through unprecedented challenges, Indigenous

communities struggling to find justice, a global climate emergency, and people poor and marginalized by society. How does my presence help make this world with all its failings a little more peaceful, a little more just, and a little more loved? That is the call of this Easter day.

May Easter be a verb in my life, an action word that brings openness and newness and hope. In one of his poems, Gerard Manley Hopkins says of Jesus the Christ, "Let him easter in us, be a dayspring to the dimness of us, be a crimson-cressed east." May this be the prayer of our Easter day and Easter days to come. Let Jesus the Christ Easter in us!

We conclude our reflections with a poem-prayer from [Thom Shuman](#):

On this Easter, as on that first day long ago,  
you come, Steadfast Love,  
continuing to walk with us on this strange pilgrimage of worry, fear, and loss,  
showing us the good news of the empty tomb, calling  
us to run and tell everyone of the new life which is ours.

On this Easter morning, as on that early first morning, you wait and watch,  
Gardener of the seeds of love, hope, and grace you



planted deep within us,  
as we stand amazed at the harvest of hope and life  
which is handed to us this day as you call us by our names.

In those early morning moments, Spirit of the broken-hearted friends,  
you whispered of that love which cannot be held behind  
the stones of our fears and doubts,  
of that hope which puts grave clothes into bandages for the hurting,  
of that grace which turns cartwheels in the gardens of our hearts,  
even as you whisper them to us.

On this Easter, as on every day,  
your grace, your peace, your love give us new life and hope,  
God in Community, Holy in One.

