

4/21/19 Jn. 20: 1-18 & Acts 10: 34,, 37-43

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#### ENTERING THE SCENE:

Fr. Henri Nouwen tells it like this: “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.”

This Easter do you hear your name?

#### [John 20 1-18](#)

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.) (*Revised Common Lectionary continues*) 10 Then the disciples went back to their homes, 11 but **Mary** stood outside the tomb **crying**. As she **wept**, she bent over to look into the **tomb** 12 and saw two **angels** in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the **head** and the other at the **foot**. 13 They asked her, "Woman, why are you **crying**?" "They have taken my Lord away," she said, "and I don't know where they have put him." 14 At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus. 15 **Woman**," he said, "why are you **crying**? Who is it you are looking for?" Thinking he was the **gardener**, she said, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him." 16 Jesus said to her, "**Mary**." She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, "**Rabboni!**" (Which means Teacher). 17 Jesus said, "Do not **hold** on to me, for I have not yet returned to the Father. Go instead to my **brothers** and tell them, 'I am returning to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" 18 **Mary Magdalene** went to the disciples with the news: "I have seen the **Lord!**" And she told them that he had said these things to her.

**DISCUSSION QUESTION:** [Fr. Donald Goergen O.P](#) says: “History does not provide us with the meaning of the resurrection; rather: the resurrection gives us the meaning of history”. Is this true for you?

**PRAYER:** Risen Jesus, only Mary risked whatever might happen to go to the tomb. She loved you for your own self, not for what you could do for her or others. You reveal what God's love truly is and that this love is without conditions. I am drawn to you for the same reason. Help me as I live into realizing what this love means. Amen.

Back in 1984 I asked Fr. Beck to design a logo for our new venture that was to be known as The Growing Edge. [He created this and](#) said that the “Growing Edge should always be about growing things at the edges of what was assumed possible.” Every now and then he would hide a part of it in one of his drawings as in the one here and wait to see how long it would take me to spot it. Do you see it? The Growing Edge took on a new name after surviving three floods and became The Ark, hence the [www.theark1.com](http://www.theark1.com). I invite you to see what it is becoming now.

## 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 I ever spent a night in agony, waiting for the dawn, when I could begin to do something I desperately wanted to do? What feelings from this event are still very present still?*

**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.

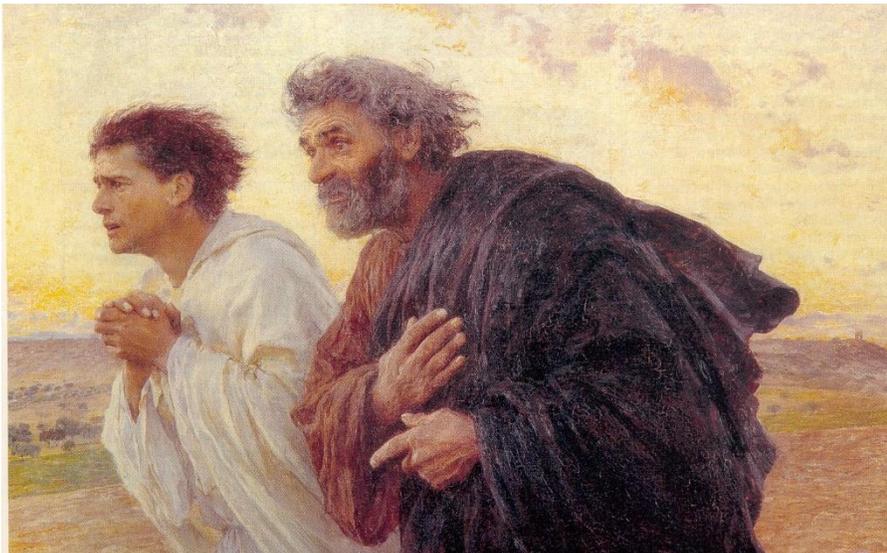
*Why do I think John does this? Could the quality of the love relationship with Jesus, uncomplicated by messianic expectations, be a critical factor in someone's ability to really "see" who he was? Have I ever not recognized someone because my expectation clouded my vision?*

**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 I was Mary, do I think that might have been one of the possibilities racing through my mind as I saw the stone rolled away? Is there anything in Chapter 20 that helps me 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 I were a mourner and had come to a gravesite, only to find it an open hole, what do I think I would feel or think? Even with Jesus' resurrection as a precedent, would I immediately leap to the conclusion that my person had been raised from the dead?*



**RUNNING:** With more adrenaline than sense, the disciple's race to the tomb.

*What do I think they expected to find? Is there anything in this chapter that helps me 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 me 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 I think happened in that tomb? What do I feel happened? How do thinking and feeling differ in what conclusion I 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 me understand what John might have been saying in verse 8? What does this tell me about the other disciples (probably John's) reaction to what he saw?*

**CRYING / WEPT:** Mary is back at the tomb crying. Her loss is now compounded as she has the agony of losing even the body, with all that might mean.

*Why do I think she went back to the tomb? What does that suggest about her relationship with Jesus?*

**ANGELS:** For the first time, Mary stoops to look in the tomb and she sees the angels. Angels are messengers of God in the bible who often help people see from a new "angle". They usually bring news or challenges from God.

*What effect does the angels question have on Mary? What does her answer tell me about her state of mind?*

**HEAD / FOOT:** The angels seem to act as ‘bookends’ to the place where Jesus’ body had been placed.  
*What do I think John wanted me to know by giving me this piece of information?*

**WOMAN:** Jesus calls his mother ‘woman’ as he hung on the cross, and now he uses this same term for Mary.  
*Does this seem strange? What do I think he was doing by using this term rather than their names?*

**GARDENER:** In those days, a person who was a minister who sidelined as a gravedigger was called a fossarian. Mary obviously does not expect what she is to find.  
*What is keeping her from seeing who is right in front of her?*

**MARY:** It is not until Jesus says her name that Mary recognizes who it is.  
*What happened, that she now is able to see who Jesus is? Could it be that only Jesus said her name like that?*

**RABBONI:** Mary now calls Jesus teacher.  
*What has she learned?*

**HOLD:** Mary is now told not to ‘hold’ on to her expectations of Jesus. It will never be like it was before. She must leave and tell the others what she has learned.  
*What has the total unconditional love of God in the resurrected Christ, taught me about the God who raised Jesus? Do I, like Mary, now have the task to share that consciousness with others?*

**BROTHERS:** Jesus calls the disciples brothers. Their failure to stay faithful to him before his death has not changed the way he loved them or his vision for them.  
*Have I accepted that God loves me like that also? If not, why?*

**LORD:** Mary now calls Jesus Lord. He has moved from being teacher to being Lord.  
*Has Jesus moved from being a teacher to being Lord for me? How does this account of the Resurrection help me to move to Jesus being Lord?*

**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:**

Remember that this next dimension is not the same things as the afterlife. It is not later but *lighter*, a more subtle quality of aliveness that aired works with us (otherwise we would not be alive at all) and has ever been the real causal ground from which we receive out life breath by breath. The only change in state imparted by physical death is that during the time we are outwardly clothed in human flesh it appears to be inside us; after the physical body has dropped away, we discover that all along we have been inside it! Pg. 188. Bourgeault, Cynthia [The Holy Trinity and the Law of Three](#). Shambhala Pub, In. Boulder, Co 2013

The final stage of incarnation is resurrection! This is no exceptional miracle only done once in the body of Jesus. It is the final and fulfilled state of all embodiment. Now even the new physics tells us that matter itself is a manifestation of spirit, and spirit or shared consciousness is the real thing. Matter also seems to be eternal. We do say in the Creed that we believe in "the resurrection of the body," whereas many of us--still followers of Plato more than Jesus--only believe in the eternal nature of the soul. God appears to be resurrecting everything all the time and everywhere. It is not something to "believe in" as much as it is something to observe and be taught by. Resurrection is simply incarnation come to its logical, certain, and full conclusion. It demonstrates, for those who are ready to see, that this world, this flesh, this physicality is part of the eternal truth and forever matters to God. Richard Rohr

"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's resurrection is the beginning of God's new project not to snatch people away from earth to heaven but to colonize earth with the life of heaven. That, after all, is what the Lord's Prayer is about.”  
— N.T. Wright, *Surprised by Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church*

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.  
Wilken, Robert L. *The Spirit of Early Christian Thought*. London: Yale Univ. Press. 2003.

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 someone 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

Lk. 24.1–12: Women at the tomb (Mt 28.1–8; Mk 16.1–8; Jn 20.1–13). 1: Taking the spices, see 23.55–56n. 4: Dazzling clothes suggest angels (see v. 23), as does sudden appearance and supernatural knowledge (vv. 5–7). 6: He told you, 9.22; 13.32–33. 10: See 8.1–3; Jn 19.25; 20.2. 11: They did not believe, many commentators claim, incorrectly, that the men did not believe because Jews do not accept women's testimony; to the contrary, the eleven do not believe because they do not expect Jesus to rise (see Jn 20.25). Pg. | 149. [The Jewish Annotated New Testament](#)

## THE HELLENISTIC PERIOD: BENCH TOMBS

In the Hellenistic period, "bench" tombs located near the family patrimony were also common. The St. Etienne tombs north of Jerusalem preserve some fine examples. In general, such a tomb consisted of a central court surrounded by burial chambers, each of which contained waist-high "benches" on which to place a body. To make room for new burials, skeletal remains and other objects were relocated to a repository (a pit) in the center of the room or under a bench. Pottery and other objects found in the tombs were placed there sometimes for the deceased, but more often for those who visited the tomb for cultic or other purposes.

## THE BURIAL OF JESUS

Accounts of the death and burial of Jesus reflect the cultural beliefs and practices of that day. People lamented him (Luke 23:27, 48; see also Luke 8:52). Jesus' body may have been washed (Acts 9:37) before Joseph of Arimathea, a disciple, wrapped it in a linen shroud and placed it in his own new tomb, hewn in the soft limestone rock (Matt 27:59-60). Friends came to the tomb after the Sabbath intending to anoint the body (Luke 24:1).

Joseph of Arimathea's tomb may have been a family tomb or perhaps a "personal" tomb, if one interprets Matthew's description of him as "rich" to indicate social prestige. It was part of the intricate cemetery complex that surrounds the walled city of Jerusalem.

## ROLLING STONE TOMB

The entrance to this sort of tomb was sealed by a circular, disk like stone that was set into a groove carved in front of the rectangular-shaped entrance to the tomb. The stone could be rolled in one direction or the other to seal or open the entrance. Even a small-sized stone, e.g., four feet in diameter and six to eight inches thick, would be difficult if not impossible for one person alone to roll away. The stone served to protect the contents of the tomb from thieves.

Still, the fact that Jesus was buried in the tomb of a stranger, even though one well-disposed toward him, added insult to injury, as it were. Jesus was not interred among his ancestors, like the patriarchs. He did not "sleep with his fathers," nor was he "gathered to his people." Moreover, no one sought to rectify this situation for him as did David for the bones of Saul.  
Pilch, John J. *The Cultural Dictionary of the Bible*. Pg.43.

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 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

The resurrection of Jesus changes the face of death for all His people. Death is no longer a prison, but a passage into God's presence. Easter says you can put truth in a grave, but it won't stay there. - Clarence W. Hall

[Easter](#) is an event that demands a "yes" or a "no." There is no "whatever." Fr. James Martin

#### **SELECTED READINGS:**

Links to all the books mentioned in this guide are on The Ark web site: [www.theark1.com](http://www.theark1.com)

Beck, Robert. *Sunday Homilies: Cycle B 2007*. Pgs. 83-85.

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