

## *Tell our stories boldly!*

### *John 20: 1-18 The Resurrection of Jesus*

Mary Magdalene in the quiet of the night went to the tomb where Jesus had been laid and in the darkness she realized the stone had been removed; Mary who had been there that night that Jesus broke bread and gave it to his disciples to eat in remembrance of him. Mary, who had watched him go with the disciples to the garden of Gethsemane where he prayed and the disciples slept. Mary, who watched Jesus being led to face charges before Pontius Pilate; Jesus, who would not run away, but who had been betrayed by Judas, denied by Peter, and who hung on a cross, died, and whose body was taken to the tomb where Mary stood in the darkness.

One can only imagine what might have been going through her mind: fear, anxiety, the curiosity mixed with hope and dread as she saw that the tomb had been opened. What would you do if you were the one that reached the tomb first? Would you be like Peter and the other disciple who ran to the tomb in a kind of a foot race, trying to reach it first, to be the first one there? Would you be like Peter, who, once you got there, became afraid and could not go in? Or would you be the other disciple who went straight in and saw the linen wrapping, lying there empty and in that moment believe?

For many years I have done all night vigils with youth. We did not do that this year. And in that time I would invite the youth to reflect on that question. One of the youth wrote, "In that moment, everything that Mary had told me would have been rushing through my head and I would have been thinking the worst. What if this, what if that? What if something had happened to Jesus in the tomb? I might not have entered the tomb because I would feel that I am not good enough to have the honour of being able to see Jesus and be in Jesus' tomb. I know that I would be too afraid to see what was or wasn't there."

I think that in that moment Mary did what we all would have done; ran and told others who loved Jesus that the tomb had been opened. She found Simon Peter and the other disciples whom Jesus loved and together they ran back to that tomb. Out of breath and with anxious hearts, they bent down at the entrance of the tomb and looked inside. They saw that Jesus' body was gone. They didn't know what to do with what they had seen, so they went home. So let me ask you this; why would you go look for the living among the dead?

In the wee hours of the morning spent thinking about this question, my first thought is that I am trying to hold onto something; an experience, a feeling that no longer exists. I guess it's human nature to want to find something good to come out of something bad or even death itself. After Simon Peter and the other disciple left the tomb Mary stood there weeping, saddened by the loss of the man whom she loved and respected, who had transformed her life, had made her feel worthy, helped her to realize that God loved her for who she was. She too was trying hard to hold on to something.

I think we often do this in life. We try to hold on to the moments in our lives when we've experienced joy. But when we hold on to things of the past we miss what's going on in the present right before our eyes, like Mary, who didn't realize that Jesus was standing right next to her as she wept. Through her tears she saw not only two angels; she stood before Jesus and did not recognize him at first until she heard him say her name, Mary. And in that moment she turned around, she looked him in the eyes and she knew. And then she felt compelled to run and tell others, "I have seen the Lord."

Easter faith is not the capacity to believe in a miracle. Many people struggle with this story, because there are angels, the tomb is empty, when we know that Jesus died and was put there. Easter faith is not about proving the story from a historical point of view or from a scientific point of view. Easter faith is about trust. And Easter is not a single moment, but a reoccurring event. What will keep us from being afraid? Today we are talking about what it means to wake up in the morning and live a life of faith just like Mary did that morning, where we answer God's call, where we use the gifts that God has given us to seek justice, to love and serve others and to embody Christ's presence in the world. Today we need to hear that in the midst of our fears and doubts that the raised one is present.

Jesus is walking among us, walking with us. Jesus is greeting us in our places of fears, our tombs, and by trusting in God the stones of our fears are rolled away opening us up to the resurrection hope, the love that can transform us every day. These are the moments in our life when we are like Peter. Where we fear the consequences of our actions, where we have held back our love and devotion from the ones we love for fear of judgment, for fear of being persecuted for these feelings. There are moments in our lives where we are like Judas, where we betray what we know to be true, where we do things that hurt others; sometimes intentionally, and sometimes unintentionally and there are also moments in our life where we are like Mary, where we fear that we are alone and isolated, but today on this day, we celebrate the fact that Jesus is risen, that Jesus has overcome death. The stone of fear is rolled away. The stone of fear has been transformed into a place of strength and understanding. The stone of fear no longer holds us back or blocks us from loving each other, for forgiving each other, for forgiving ourselves, and for finding a way to love each other as well as ourselves.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ gives us hope and brings us peace and gives us new life. We each have so many things to be thankful for. As we roll the stones of fear aside, light is shed in

the shadows. Light brings warmth to our lives. The light of Christ helps us to see the world in a new way; a way that helps us to appreciate the small things in our lives. The simple act of eating a meal with friends, the simple act of calling people we love for no reason, but to simply hear their voice. The simple act of appreciating the colour of flowers, the laughing with friends, or seeing the uniqueness of each person we encounter is how we live together as a community of broken but hopeful believers. Loving what Jesus loved, living what Jesus taught and striving to be faithful servants of God in this time and place. Your call today is to go out and share your stories boldly of where Christ is at work in the world. Where the Holy Spirit is alive in our midst and where God is transforming the world because we have embodied God's love. May we all continue to be faithful witnesses of Jesus Christ in all we do and say. Thanks be to God.

Amen.