



12 April 2020

## *Dear Parishioners and Friends,*

The story of that first Easter morning does not begin with the Resurrection of Jesus. How could it? No one was there! No one saw what happened or could report the phenomenon as many artists and visionaries have imagined it. As we read in the Gospels, the Resurrection is already accomplished with no human witnesses and, according to Matthew (28:2-6), before the stone is rolled away.

The first Easter testimony, then, is not to the actual Resurrection of Jesus but to the emptiness of his tomb. We hear this in all the gospels. Mark speaks of an angelic appearance on site, and Matthew adds an encounter with Jesus himself by the women as they leave to tell the other disciples. Luke has *two* angels, has no meeting with Jesus, and includes the first story of Peter returning to the site to see the burial cloths inside. John gives us more accounts, focused on Mary Magdalene. First, Mary alone seeing the empty tomb and, when she reports this, Peter and another disciple searching the tomb for clues. But because Mary remains (“stayed outside the tomb weeping”), she is privileged to see the rest of the story: the presence of the angels and the “gardener” who upon engagement turns out to be Jesus. She alone is called by name on Easter morning, and she alone returns to the community able to declare, “I have seen the Lord!”



As we celebrate this Easter amidst the pandemic, we are very much in Mary’s place. We see so much emptiness. We are separated from many family members and friends. We may be carrying the burden of knowing people who are infected...or who have died from the virus. New concerns about the future are filling our thoughts. Celebrations that enrich life are on hold or very different, including not being together for Mass. Like Mary, we carry great sadness. An understandable human reaction is to turn away, to keep distracted, to dwell in vain wishes. So, this year, Mary Magdalene’s example is important. Allow time to remain with the Easter story in our minds and hearts, even while we are experiencing sadness and emptiness. So that, like Mary, when we sense the presence of the Lord in a thought, a word from Scripture, a memory of Jesus in our lives, we will recognize his presence.

Happy Easter to All!

*Fr. Jim Wood, Pastor*