

Reading or hearing the Easter story is always something to look forward to, especially this year, when we are news-weary and ready for some Good News. Hearing the old, old story today, is way beyond the good news, say, of a warm, sunny day in Ohio or a great Easter dinner waiting. This story is THE best story ever, as believers the world over reflect on it's meaning: **Resurrection is not the end of the story!**

Where were you when you realized that the resurrection of Jesus Christ makes a difference--no-- is the **pivotal** happening of faith in your life? The shock of hearing about an empty tomb can wear off after years of hearing it told, along with some theological rationales or justifications of an event that some say should not be believed. Karoline Lewis, writer for the week's lectionary texts, says that we have **kept** Jesus in the tomb when we fail to *say anything to anyone* about the truth we can hardly believe (because it is so wonderful)!

Mary Magdalene did not have this problem. No matter if you read the gospel in Matthew, Mark, Luke or in John, this is what jumps out: **The resurrection is only the beginning!** In Mark, after his death, Jesus tells his disciples to go on to Galilee, where he will be waiting for them in

person! (Mark 16:7)! In John, Jesus hangs around to let Mary know he is still there, and although he doesn't let her hug him or hold him "because he is about to ascend to the Father", he chooses a woman to be the first to see his resurrected body. "Don't hold on to me," he warns her. She needs this jolt from Jesus to plant in her the realization that from now on, it won't be like it was before the crucifixion. From now on, she would encounter Christ in the community of the church rather than in his physical or earthly body. Jesus has been glorified in his resurrection, and so his earthly body, although it still contained the crucifixion wounds he would later show Thomas, it was not the same. (He could pass through walls, for one thing) No, it can't be like it was, it will be different, but better! Richard Rohr explains it this way:" That Jesus' physical wounds do not disappear is telling. The mystical, counterintuitive message of death and resurrection is powerfully communicated through symbol. The major point is that Jesus has not left the human sphere; he is revealing the goal, the fullness, and the purpose of humanity itself, which is "that we are able to share in the divine nature (2Peter 1;4, even in this wounded and wounding world. Jesus is saying, "I am human—which means to be wounded and resurrected at the same time. Christ returns to his physical body, and yet he is now unlimited by space or time and is without any regret or recrimination while still, ironically, carrying his wounds."

Mysterious. A paradox. Wonderful.

And then, Jesus commissions Mary to be the first evangelist, to go tell “my brothers”, as he refers to his disciples here, that “I am alive, resurrected. Oh, and by the way, YOU are the one that is to tell them. You, Mary, the person who was one of five who stood at my cross and would not let me die alone, the one who has been consistently politically incorrect, accused of all sorts of things, including being a prostitute. Mary. Yes, Mary needs some extra assurance that the life and the hope that Jesus poured into her life is only beginning!

As early as 200AD, Mary was the subject of writers in the early church. Remember that women, in Greco-Roman culture, were seen as lower than men. Patriarchy had to find a way of reducing her to a scarlet sinner and so an early pope “confused” her with the woman caught in adultery and the confusion stuck ---for millenniums. She is reduced to a Sinner with a capital “S”.

But that turns it on its head for me. Because, I, too am a notorious sinner. I, too, am much better at messing up than I am at succeeding. I, too, cannot often recognize the face of my Savior for the veil of my

tears that hides him. We all weep for what we had, for what could have been, for what is not, in our limited way of knowing and comprehending. But these words in John provide the foundation that give me a foothold on hope, a place to put down my whole weight and place my hope in the eternal.

Even though the mystery is great and the details are scarce, this is the most wonderful story EVERY TOLD! We have no excuse for keeping it quiet, hush, hush, not wanting to offend. Yes, we must be sensitive, but how can one not want to shout it to the world: There is more to this life than things! There is more to this life than power over or the opposite-selfishness! There is an eternity of beings waiting for us to cross the threshold, a sphere that is loving and filled with perfect joy. We must be ready to give witness to this wonderful thing that Peter says: “Though you have not seen him, you love him, and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of our souls. “ [I Pet.1:8]

This is the Easter message! We have been redeemed! And for me, a baby-boomer, born on Easter, April 5th, 1953, I need to know that there

is a reason for my life, that I, like Mary, have a faith worth talking about. I, like Mary, am an eye witness. She proclaimed what she had “touched”, “seen”, and “heard”, all sensory verbs used in I John 1: 1-3 to say, “This is real. And we have to tell it, or in John’s case, write it. (Read this passage)i

*That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. The life appeared, we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. We write this to make our **joy** complete.*

In our Easter story in John 20 , Mary moves in three ways: She moves from the Greek participle “weeping” in verse 11 to “turning” in verse 14, to “proclaiming” in verse 16. She weeps for the past, she turns when she is called by name, recognizing the voice of her salvation, and then she proclaims his identity: “Raboni: Teacher!”

And that is what we do as a Christ-followers! We weep over what is not right in this world, but then we must TURN and remember that we are precious children of God, called and known by name:

Rachael, of Wooster, LaVerne, of Akron, Bob, of Orrville, Cheryl, of Barberton, Frank, from Litchfield --- and **all** of this vibrant Summit congregation becomes energized to joyfully announce God's eternal presence, to find the Good and the True, and to talk about it! Mary was "the Easter apostle" and each of us is, too!

Luke 7:22—" Go and tell John what you see and hear, that the blind recover their sight!" Go, Tell! **There is no longer anything between God and us!** The Temple curtain has been forever torn, removed ! Christ's resurrection propels us , call us into a new community utterly different from the surrounding culture: a community of love, grace, peace and justice. **Christ's resurrection becomes the eighth day of creation!**

You've probably heard the story of the Philip, the little Downs' syndrome boy who, along with his Sunday School class, is given an empty plastic egg and told to go outside and find something that would help tell the meaning of Easter. All nine children do this and come back. There are oohs and ahhs, as each reveals something beautiful in the opened eggs- a twig, a flower, a blade of grass and finally the last egg

was opened. It was Philip's egg, and it was empty. Some children made fun of him. "But teacher, teacher, Philip said, "the tomb was empty!"

He saw the egg as an empty tomb. And so must we. Let's not keep Jesus in the tomb.

Christ is risen! [He is risen indeed!]

Alleluia!