

BISHOP'S EASTER MESSAGE 2017

“Resurrection – More than the Eyes can See”

John 20:1-18

20Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. **2**So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.” **3**Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. **4**The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. **5**He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. **6**Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, **7**and the cloth that had been on Jesus’ head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. **8**Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; **9**for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead. **10**Then the disciples returned to their homes.

11But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; **12**and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. **13**They said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?” She said to them, “They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.” **14**When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. **15**Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?” Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.” **16**Jesus said to her, “Mary!” She turned and said to him in Hebrew, “Rabbouni!” (which means Teacher). **17**Jesus said to her, “Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’” **18**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.

My sisters and brothers in Christ,

The Lord is risen indeed!

In the above passage of scripture from John’s Gospel, I decided to quote the entire text so that we can hopefully gain a new insight into what the earliest experience of the resurrection was like for those who were there. There were Mary Magdalene, Simon Peter and another disciple at the burial site of Jesus early on that first Easter morn. All three saw the empty tomb; all three realized that the body of Jesus was no longer where it was supposed to be; and all three became totally bewildered by what they had experienced. John records in his Gospel in verse 9: “... **for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead**” though they apparently believed what they were seeing. Some may even argue that the three had a bit of ‘head knowledge’ and ‘heart knowledge’ but that the two had not fully integrated themselves with each other in any of the three - yet.

Interestingly, the reaction of the three to this most unique of experiences could not have been more different. It was a contrast that spoke volumes about not only their state of mind, but also the condition of their hearts. Peter and the other disciple simply ‘**returned to their homes.**’ Mary Magdalene instead remained at the tomb –

hurting deep in her heart but still unafraid; bewildered, yes, but not filled with despair. She knew there was more to this experience than what her eyes have seen so far.

Mary did not simply go back home. Why such a difference in response? Why did she stay on when the others had left? Did Mary love Jesus more than the other two? Did her life with Jesus prior to his death one of such impact and transformation that she simply refused to accept such an end to it all? Was she simply too baffled and disoriented to make the move home? As a result, Mary was granted the vision of two angels, the vision of the Risen Christ, and the apostolic message to ‘go and tell’ others that the **‘Lord is Risen Indeed!!!’**

Yet, I do not care to speculate further as to Mary’s reason for doing what she did. However, I do believe the story is recorded for us to appreciate what it takes to fully receive the new life God offers us in the resurrection of our Lord.

Mary’s ultimate response to the experience says it all. John records in verse 18: **“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.”** In other words, my sisters and brothers, Mary accepted the call from her Risen Lord to evangelize – to share the Good News of His resurrection. She equipped herself by patiently waiting to experience Jesus the Christ in the new life he promised – and she did it for herself.

It is not enough to simply be the casual observer who looks on with curiosity and then becomes satisfied with the knowledge that something important has occurred. For such there is little to no sense of the impact of the experience so they return to life as usual – convinced that nothing really has changed.

Easter beckons us beyond such a casual and inconsequential reception of the power of the resurrection. Instead, it calls on us to enter the experience more fully, free from our usual apprehension, fear and intimidation. We become equipped to evangelize the Good News of the Resurrection with conviction, courage and commitment.

‘Lord is Risen Indeed!!!

A most Blessed and Holy Easter Season to all.