

SEEING MY OWN SELF IN A POST-RESURRECTION WORLD

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Personally, I try to avoid catastrophic thinking. It wastes energy and can be depressing. It is however so easy at times to jump to the wrong and most extreme conclusion. At home, at church, in life, I appreciate aural and visual feedback – it's an insecurity issue for me. So if I don't find response, to something I have said or done, I sometimes panic. All is lost . . .

And Mary Magdalene does seem . . . tense. As for what Mary expected to find at the tomb, or why she and the others went there in the first place, we are unsure. In truth, she is the truth-telling sage, one who will influence generations of believers including ourselves throughout the ages. She gets it! And well! though it takes some time.

The need for preparation described in the synoptics is absent in John. Joseph of Arimathea took care of that two days previously. John's narrative is one of discovery, not necessity. Mary's motivation may be the same as why people visit cemeteries or monuments (like VIMY) in our own day. Closeness counts for something, even if no two-way conversation is possible. For John Jesus' resurrection is a sign, *The Sign* of miracle and wonder and of a new world.

I can't help but make the connection with crime fiction, where we readers are shown a body but we don't know who murdered the person or why. In the resurrection Gospel stories, we have no body but we know who did it and why. We have before us a different sort of murder mystery, and the intrigue continues, for some till this very day.

I suspect all of us in the room are convinced that God-in-Christ has triumphed over all adversaries and deathly powers. So our question is not so much "what happened" but "so what?" or "what's next?" This is certainly true for Mary. We discover more about Mary than the circumstances, method or process of Jesus' rising from the dead. She is one who is not scared to act on, and through her curiosity. So she risks embarrassment, emotional turmoil, and peer ridicule as she tries to come to terms with what has just happened.

Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; 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.

John's detail is noteworthy, the place where Jesus lay is bounded by angelic grace, in other words, from end to end, from start to finish, Jesus' absence is explained by and through God's presence and Grace even in a tomb. How ironic! Confronted with this most unusual scene her questioning continues:

I do not know where they have laid him.'

True? Absolutely true! Remember: NO BODY! She is literally befuddled. She does "not know" the complete truth about Jesus, about herself, about the community which will eventually become the Church, about the role of history, neither of the and opportunities before her. Everything, EVERYTHING, has changed! While her male companions have scattered to the wind (as the CBC comedy show says they have run "madly off in all directions") she alone remains steadfast. And reality keeps shifting, right under her very feet, in the garden.

(S)he turned round and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus.

If "seeing is believing" she's not there yet. Until it seems the next breath . . .

Jesus said to her, 'Mary!' She turned and said to him in Hebrew, '**Rabbouni!**' (which means Teacher).

Now we're getting somewhere . . . discovery--through sound, sight, hunch, or something impossible to describe clicks in. The action continues, helpfully and hopefully. Her experience next inspires belief in others. Remember the woman with whom Jesus

spoke at the well of Jacob many weeks ago, in John's fourth chapter. She, like Mary becomes a witness:

'I have seen the Lord'; and she told (the disciples) that he had said these things to her.

So what then does Mary see? Well **she sees the resurrected Jesus for the first time**. She is the first resurrection witness. We see here and elsewhere how Christianity is a faith animated by story-telling. Even the most dense theological and philosophical reflection is in fact story-telling. Each author, evangelist, lay preacher, bishop or presiding priest decides what facts and feelings to assemble, order and share.

As we each have been transformed, so we transform others and other communities. As we each discover the truth about Jesus **we discover the truth about ourselves**. I spoke on Good Friday of Pilate's question "what is truth." I repeat the challenge but with more detail. What is truth about God, about ourselves, about our world and about each other? **Mary sees her own true self in resurrection light.**

Sometimes at night, we take a flashlight to find our way, shining it both on obstacles in our way and in search of our destination. God-in-Christ bathes Mary in resurrection-light, so she can see herself in a new and wonderful way. Remember where John started his Gospel, for us most recently heard on Christmas Eve:

“The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it.” Indeed, this is Truth. The truth about life, love and ourselves.

St Paul takes us to similar emotional and experiential territory: “Now we see dimly but soon we shall see face to face.” Mary gets eyeball-to-eyeball engagement. Things will be different for us. That said, we shall see with clarity God-in Christ, around us, about us, among us, within us. Friends it is so good to gather together today, to encourage one another, to provoke, to bask and bathe in the Light of the Risen Christ together.

Alleluia, the Lord is Risen, He is risen indeed, Alleluia. And Happy Easter to you all.

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