

Easter Day 2025
Sermon – Saint Joseph Parish
Father Craig Looney
John 20.1-10



Mary Magdalene is perplexed. She has just arrived at Jesus' grave and she has found it empty. She reached the only conclusion that made sense to her at the time...someone had stolen his body. She went to tell Peter and John what she found.

They ran to the grave and saw it was empty. Surely someone had made off with the body of Jesus. Had we been there with Mary Magdalene, Peter and John, we would have reached the same conclusion? Why. Because the Easter Story is perplexing.

The Mystery of the Resurrection ranks right up there with the other Great Mysteries of our Faith: The Incarnation, The Virgin Birth, The Ascension, The Holy Trinity and The Holy Eucharist. We generally don't like mysteries...we like things wrapped up in nice neat packages we can fully understand.

However, when we spend time trying to explain the Mystery of the Resurrection, it is no longer a mystery. It becomes an interesting problem to be solved. People who are looking for a rational explanation of the Resurrection won't find one. Easter defies explanation. Easter at its core doesn't make sense. Skeptics demand tangible, empirical, evidence an event has happened before they believe it is true. There is an old saying, "Seeing is believing!"

At last night's Vigil...we entered the church...still dark from Maundy Thursday Evening and Good Friday. We chanted...*the Light of Christ...Thanks be to God*. The Paschal Candle was lighted...symbolizing Jesus' return from death...the sadness of Good Friday is now replaced by joy, hope and expectation.

We have an advantage over Mary Magdalene and the others...we know how the story turns out. But we can understand what must have been going through her mind. She must have been confused, bewildered, shocked, frightened, brokenhearted, overwhelmed by grief. Jesus would make himself known to her after the Resurrection and appear to her. He called her by name, "Mary."

Jesus told Mary to go back and tell the others he has risen...just as he said he said he would. Her glad surprise at seeing Jesus again would also be his friends' glad surprise...and ours. Jesus' friends were happy to receive the news he had rise. But there was one of Jesus' friends who had his doubt. Thomas wasn't with the others the first time Jesus showed himself to his friend after the Resurrection.

Thomas wasn't the world's first skeptic, but he had his doubts what the others told him was true. He wanted empirical evidence. He wouldn't believe unless he touched Jesus' wounds. The second time Jesus appeared to his friends Thomas was with them. When Thomas touched Jesus' wounds, he could say nothing but, "My Lord and My God!" Jesus replied, "How happy are those who haven't seen, yet believe."

We live in an age of skepticism...people believe only what they can see and handle...if it isn't tactile...it doesn't exist or isn't true. Our Faith is a matter of the heart. Jesus promised before his death he would be going back to his Father in heaven. He would send the Holy Spirit...the Holy Helper...who would lead us into all truth. Empowered by the Holy Spirit who daily increases our Faith...we believe!

And we believe in the Resurrection because of the eyewitness testimonies of Mary Magdalene and the others who saw Jesus for themselves. If we want more proof Jesus is risen...we see the awesome power of his Resurrection at work in our daily lives.

Jesus told Mary to go tell the others...and the others went out and told others. We are told to do the same...tell others! What do we say?

Alleluia! The Lord is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

