

Easter Day 2026
Sermon – Saint Joseph Parish
Father Craig Looney
St. John 20.1-10



*Lumina Christi...*the Light of Christ...words we chanted as we entered a darkened church at last night's Easter Vigil. The Exultet was said...the ancient hymn that begins...

...“Rejoice now, heavenly hosts and choirs of angels, and let your trumpets shout Salvation for the victory of our mighty King.”

We blessed and lighted the Paschal Candle...the candles at the High Altar were lighted from the Paschal Candle...then the church lights were turned on. Darkness has been turned into light. But we are still left waiting...for what was next.

Mary Magdalene is a key character in this morning's Gospel. She and the disciples were confused, bewildered, afraid, of what might come next. They did not yet know how the Easter Story was to play out. And so they waited.

The Gospel tells us Mary Magdalene was the first to arrive at Jesus' grave. We can only imagine how she felt when she discovered it was empty. She must have thought grave robbers had stolen the body. We are told she ran back to town to tell the Disciples what she found.

While there is no humor whatsoever in the events of Good Friday...there is subtle humor in this morning's Gospel. Peter and John (who calls himself the disciple Jesus loved), raced to the graveyard. John wants us to know he outran Peter...well he was a lot younger. He too found the grave empty.

Peter then arrives and sees for himself what Mary Magdalene had told them was true. The Gospel tells us they believed...but what did they believe? Peter and John went to their own homes, confused more than ever. They had seen Jesus die on the cross on Good Friday. They could not have understood or believed in his Resurrection...at least not yet.

Let's imagine we are also characters in this morning's Gospel and find ourselves looking at Jesus' empty grave. We might come to the same conclusion..."they" have stolen his body...and we don't know where "they" have taken him. That would be a logical conclusion for people

who understand death...but not the resurrection of the body into eternal life.

The Easter Cantic printed in this morning's Order of Service provides us with a powerful meditation on why we are here today...

...Christ is risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept.

For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead.

For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.

Easter Day challenges us to believe in the ultimate paradox...the ultimate Divine Reversal...that the death of Jesus leads us to everlasting life. We believe by faith what much of the world thinks is impossible... the Resurrection of Jesus.

We cannot believe in the Resurrection of Jesus or the promise of our own resurrections to everlasting life the Easter Cantic teaches us... unless we have God's grace and the power of the Holy Spirit...who opens our hearts and minds to believe what John (the one Jesus loved) says is true ...and not a made-up story.

This morning's Gospel ends with Mary Magdalene, Peter and John, heading home, still waiting for what happens next. We have a distinct advantage over them. We know how the story turns out.

We don't have to wait any longer to go out into the world and tell everyone who will listen what we know to be true. We have Good News to share...

...“Alleluia the Lord is risen! The Lord is risen indeed, Alleluia!”

Happy Easter!

