

**Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> April 2026**

***Easter Day***

**Gospel Reading**

**John 20.1-18**

**The Resurrection of Jesus**

Early 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. 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.' Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went towards the tomb. The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, and the cloth that had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead. Then the disciples returned to their homes.

**Jesus Appears to Mary Magdalene**

But 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. 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.' When she had said this, she turned round and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, 'Woman, why are you weeping? For whom are you looking?' 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.' Jesus said to her, 'Mary!' She turned and said to him in Hebrew, 'Rabbouni!' (which means Teacher). 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."' 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.

**Other Readings: Acts 10.34-43 or Jeremiah 31.1-6**

**Psalm 118.1-2, 14-24**

**Colossians 3.1-4**

**Homily**

Sometimes you can know a story too well.

Parents may certainly feel that way when they are begged to read a child's favourite book a fourth, or a fortieth, time. And no matter how good a film may be, we often find that there is a limit to how many times we can enjoy re-watching it. Some stories bear a lot of re-telling, others less so, and all but the very best stories start to wear out from over-use after a time.

Well I wonder where we are with regard to the story that we tell again today?

It seems most likely that this story was first told by a woman called Mariam from a place called Magdala. We know her as Saint Mary Magdalene. She went to Jesus' tomb and she found it empty. Her first reaction was bewilderment. Then she had an experience that changed her life. Later, her testimony about that experience changed the world. Over time, as her story was told and re-told, and others experienced similar things, adding their stories to hers, a small community of people emerged with a clear and shared conviction: Jesus, their teacher and friend who had been crucified, had risen from the dead.

This resurrected Jesus was the same yet different. He was able to eat and drink, to show the wounds of his crucifixion to his friends and invite them to touch him to reassure themselves that he was real. Yet he was also able to appear to them in a locked room. This was something new, what Saint Paul would later describe as 'the first fruits of the new creation'. The resurrected Jesus wasn't a resuscitated body that would ultimately die a second time, this time for ever. His new life is eternal. What's more, that first community of believers also understood that, because of what Jesus had done, the same eternal, resurrection life is offered to us.

So far, these are plain facts. That this story was told, and believed, by a group of people whose testimony transformed future history cannot be disputed. But the question that everyone who hears it has to confront, sooner or later, is whether or not it's true.

If it isn't true, then the Christian religion is built either on a falsehood or on a mistake. If the story was either a deliberate fiction, or the result of grief and confusion leading to error and misunderstanding, then the Christian message is, at the very least, rather less convincingly 'good news'. And it deserves to be one of those stories that, over time, begins to fade and lose its power to hold our attention.

But if the story is true... Well, that changes everything. If it's true, this is not just a story but the story, our story, the story within which every human being lives and dies. It is the story that makes sense of all other stories. It's a story that deserves to be told and re-told and woven into the fabric of our everyday lives.

That makes it a story that we cannot easily ignore. Faced with the empty tomb and the testimony of St Mary Magdalene, each of us must make a decision. How do we respond? What do we believe? Is this story true?

Like St Mary Magdalene, our first response to the empty tomb may be bewilderment, even fear. We may, like her, move on from there to feelings of grief and loss – ‘they have taken my Lord away and I do not know where they have laid him’. But if, like her, we remain in the garden, if we are willing to wait in that place of confusion and sadness, we may ultimately hear that most precious of voices calling our name, and recognise that this story doesn’t end in grief, but in joy, not in bewilderment, but in glorious light.

To discover, to experience the truth of this story for ourselves and in ourselves is the heart of what it means to be a Christian. Every time Christians gather for worship, they tell a version of this story that is called a Creed. And yes, in a way, we can come to know the story too well. At least, simply reciting those familiar words in church can numb us to their meaning and power. But the story itself? How could we tire of hearing what God has done for us in Jesus Christ? How could we ever cease to be amazed that God, in Christ, has conquered death, for us? For me?

Happy Easter everyone. Alleluia! Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia.

### **Conversation Questions**

1. St Mary moved from confusion to sadness to joy. How do you feel when you think about the empty tomb?
2. How can we show our faith in Christ’s resurrection in our everyday lives?
3. Is there anything else from the passage not already discussed that speaks to you? What is it?
4. What will you do this week in your Monday-to-Saturday ministry in response to what you have heard today? #everydayfaith

### **Prayer**

Spend some time in prayer, responding to what you have heard today and listening to what God might be saying to you.

### **Collect of the day**

*Lord of all life and power,  
who through the mighty resurrection of your Son  
overcame the old order of sin and death  
to make all things new in him:  
grant that we, being dead to sin  
and alive to you in Jesus Christ,  
may reign with him in glory;  
to whom with you and the Holy Spirit  
be praise and honour, glory and might,  
now and in all eternity.*

*(or)*

*God of glory,*

*by the raising of your Son  
you have broken the chains of death and hell:  
fill your Church with faith and hope;  
for a new day has dawned  
and the way to life stands open  
in our Saviour Jesus Christ.*

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