
Freedom and Life

Easter Day



Sunset over the Hooghly River, Kolkata

READING - John 20:1-18

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!"

So Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in. Then Simon Peter came along behind him and went straight into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there, as well as the cloth that had been wrapped around Jesus'

head. The cloth was still lying in its place, separate from the linen. Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed. (They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.) Then the disciples went back to where they were staying.

Now Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot.

They asked her, "Woman, why are you crying?"

"They have taken my Lord away," she said, "and I don't know where they have put him." At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realise that it was Jesus.

He asked her, "Woman, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?"

Thinking he was the gardener, she said, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him."

Jesus said to her, "Mary."

She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means "Teacher").

Jesus said, "Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'"

Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: "I have seen the Lord!" And she told them that he had said these things to her.

REFLECT

"Why are you crying?" The first words of Jesus on seeing Mary recognise her deep sense of grief and loss. That may seem a strange way to begin a reflection on Easter Day as we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus with joy. St Augustine famously said, "We are an Easter people and alleluia is our song." Those words remain as true today as they ever were. The story of Easter is life-changing and death-defeating. But it is birthed in the human reality of tears.

What does it mean to be an Easter people in the reality of the pain and suffering of our world? How can we sing a song of alleluia when injustice is rife, hopes are trampled, and fullness of life is a distant dream for many? We cannot be Easter people without recognising the tears of those who weep, and acknowledging their stories. Having asked why she is weeping Jesus speaks her name. "Mary." In that moment the rawness of grief and the promise of hope meet. Mary turns towards Jesus, daring to believe it is really him. Despite all that has happened, despite all that may happen in the future, the risen Christ is with her. The grave is open. Death is defeated, and there is nothing that cannot be touched, redeemed, and enlivened by the power of the resurrection.

CRS works to bring joy into places of weeping and new life into places of despair. It speaks the names of men, women and children who are often overlooked and marginalised, trusting that in recognising people, understanding their stories, and empowering them to fulfil their dreams, fullness of life may emerge and blossom.

RESPOND

Read the Easter story again and hear Jesus asking: "Why are you crying?" What causes you to weep in your own life? What causes you to weep for the world around you?

Hear Jesus speaking your name. Hear him speaking the name of the people and places you weep for. Know his risen presence in the heart of pain and fear.

Think about what it means to live as Easter people. What does it mean to sing a song of alleluia in our world today?

Risen Lord,
Give us a heart for simple things:
Love, laughter, bread, wine and dreams.
Fill us with green growing hope.
And make us an Easter people:
Whose song is Alleluia,
Whose sign is Peace
And whose name is Love. Amen. (Revd John Hencher)

PRAYER

Lord of life, we pray for fullness of life.
For ourselves.
For others.
For our world.
We resolve to live life in all its fullness.
We seek to enable others to live life in all its fullness too. Amen.

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