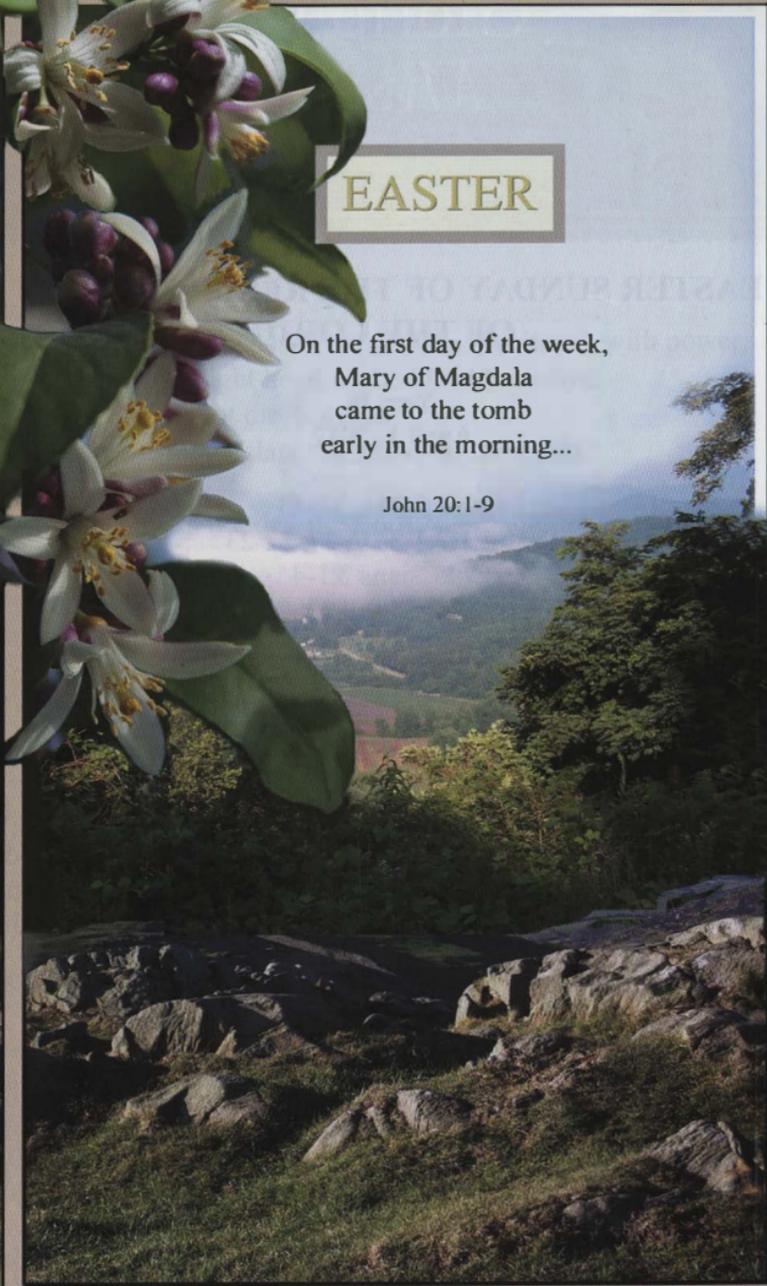


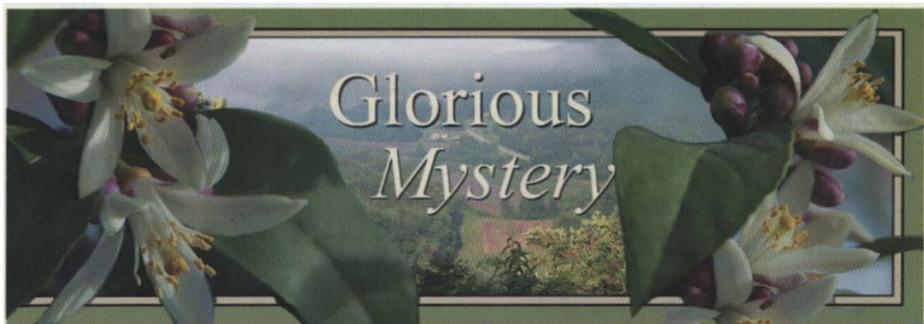


EASTER

On the first day of the week,
Mary of Magdala
came to the tomb
early in the morning...

John 20: 1-9





EASTER SUNDAY OF THE RESURRECTION OF THE LORD

Year B

Acts 10:34a, 37-43

Psalm 118:1-2, 16-17, 22-23

Colossians 3:1-4

John 20:1-9

Gathering

(A new unlit white candle and a vase of spring flowers rest on a table covered with a white or yellow cloth.)

Alleluia! Alleluia! Forty days of Lenten living give way to fifty days of boundless Easter Joy! Last week we reflected on the story of Jesus' self-sacrificial love for our sakes. When did you give yourself away for the sake of love this past week?

Prayer

(The candle is lit. Members are invited to rest in the presence of God. After a time of silence, members join in singing, "Easter Alleluia." The song may be found on the Internet. When the song is complete, the prayer continues as follows.)

Leader: This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad.

All: This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad.

Leader: Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good,
for his mercy endures forever.
Let the house of Israel say,
“His mercy endures forever.”

All: This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad.

Leader: “The right hand of the LORD has struck with power;
the right hand of the LORD is exalted.
I shall not die, but live,
And declare the works of the LORD.”

All: This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad.

Leader: The stone which the builders rejected
has become the corner stone.
By the LORD has this been done;
it is wonderful in our eyes.

All: This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad.

Psalm 118:1 2, 16-17, 22-23

HEARING THE LORD'S GOSPEL

(The scriptures are proclaimed aloud with a pause after each reading. Following a pause after the proclamation of the gospel, the leader invites members to name a word or phrase from the gospel that stays with them, but without any additional comment. Some may repeat what another has already said.)

When this naming is complete, the leader passes out copies of the scriptures of the week as needed. The leader then poses these questions: “What draws you to this gospel?” “Where do you resist this gospel?” The community pauses for a time of silent reflection. After about a minute, the

leader invites members to consider the Reflection and Questions for the week. After additional time for silent reflection, the leader invites members to re-arrange themselves in groups of three or four for sharing. The small groups move off so as not to intrude on one another.)

Reflection

In today's gospel we hear the story of the disciples' discovery of the empty tomb and their ensuing bewilderment. They wonder; who took Jesus; where have they put him; and why are his burial cloths separated and rolled up? The evangelist John tells us that, "They did not yet understand the scripture that he had to rise from the dead." In this account we gain a sense of the gradual growth required for a deeper understanding of the resurrection. It took time. It took an awakening empty tomb experience to set this in motion. It took their new experiences of his coming to them. It took the communities recounting of all that Jesus had said and done while he was with them. It took a growing and deepening faith.

The paschal mystery is just that, a mystery! We cannot understand it completely, but we can experience it in daily living. As baptized believers we are called to follow Jesus' way, a way that means dying and rising over and over again. It could be through a simple act of kindness, such as being friendly to a stranger. Or it could be through the challenging act of making oneself present to someone who is suffering. It can be by responding in faith to the suffering in our own lives. As a result of the many gestures of laying down one's life for the other, new energy and newness of life arise.

As we encounter this newness of life a sense of joyfulness arises within us and we catch a glimpse of what the paschal mystery means. Like the disciples, we need our communities to recount the many ways that Jesus is present in our lives today. Sometimes we need an awakening experience to shake us up and make us question. Above all we need to be immersed in a lived faith where dying leads to rising and our hearts are filled with the boundless joy of Easter. There is life beyond death. This is the Glorious Mystery!

Questions For Reflection And Conversation

- ◆ Share a moment of your Easter joy from this past week.
- ◆ Describe an awakening experience that drew you to question and grow in your faith.

- ◆ How is the living Jesus present to you these days?
- ◆ When is laying down your life for the other a challenge for you today?
- ◆ How have you witnessed newness of life these days?

HEARING THE GOSPEL'S LORD

(After about fifteen minutes of sharing in threes/fours, the leader re-gathers the community. Once back together, members pause for a moment. The leader then poses these questions: "What do you hear Christ saying to us in hearing and sharing his word?" "What do you want to hold on to for yourself from this session?" "How are you/we being called to live in response to God's word?" After a pause, the leader invites the community to conversation. When this sharing is complete, the community moves to a time of prayer.)

Response In Action Suggestions

- ◆ Spread your Easter joyfulness by sending a card to one or more of the newly baptized/received in your parish.
- ◆ Read **Thomas Merton: A Book of Hours** edited by Kathleen Deignan. With prayers for dawn, day, dusk and dark for each day of the week, this book brings the ancient monastic practice of praying the hours into our hectic modern lives.
- ◆ Give the gift of a sheep to help a poor family in a developing country start a flock in order to provide a better life for their children. Contact Heifer Project International by calling the Donor Services Department at (800) 422-0474, or e-mail at info@heifer.org or visit www.heifer.org.

Prayer

(After a brief pause, the gospel of the week is re-proclaimed by a member of the community. Following the proclamation, the leader poses these questions to the members: "What does Christ in his Spirit say to you now?" "What do you say to him in response?" The community pauses for a full five, perhaps even seven, minutes of prayerful attention to God. A brief instrumental may be played during part of this time. After this time of silence, the leader invites members without additional conversation simply to mention a word or two or a brief thought that captures what they hear Christ saying to them personally.)

Following this sharing, members join in singing once more, "Easter Alleluia." When the song is complete, the community prays as follows.)

All: We believe
 as Jesus believed
 that beyond pain and darkness and death,
 life in the Spirit continues
 in ways beyond our imagining.

As members of the Body of Christ
we are open
to the Spirit of New Life
in our lives
and in our world.

We give thanks
for the journey that life has been,
for all that life is for us now,
for all that the future holds,
and for the mystery of life beyond death.
Amen.

Praying a New Story by Michael
Moorwood, © 2003 USA edition printed by
Orbis Books, Maryknoll, NY.

(Members share a sign of peace.)

(Toasting the risen Lord with an "Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia," the community enjoys a festive sparkling beverage.)