

## Commentary on the Gospel for Tue, Apr 2nd 2024

### Turning one's back on world views

We reflect on Mary Magdalene's resurrection experience yet again. John narrates that she saw two angels at the place where Jesus' body was placed. Although his body is absent, John says one of the angels was facing the head, and the other faced the feet of Jesus. Try to recall the image of the two angels guarding the "mercy seat" of the Holy of Holies in the Temple. The "mercy seat" represents God's invisible presence in the Temple and God's presence in the world. With the stone rolled back, the Holy of Holies is empty. God, in Jesus, had exited the tomb to be available to the whole world.

This image of the empty tomb as an emptied Holy of Holies is similar to the image of the tearing of the Temple veil recorded in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke.

Mary turned away from the tomb and saw Jesus outside, in the garden, but mistook him to be the gardener. We are in the new garden of Eden. This garden is where new life is born. Mary's turning around, and what she was about to see would turn upside-down everything the world had known so far. The movement to the Easter faith requires turning one's back on all the previous assumptions and world views. As in the first garden, where there was a prohibition – "do not eat," here in the new garden, there is an additional prohibition too – "Do not touch me...!" A Claretian Missionary, Fr. Paulson Velianoor, in his reflections on the passage, wrote: the new prohibition "corrects the temptation to grab divinity by force instead of receiving it in gratitude."

Jesus sent Mary as the first apostle to the disciples to tell them about his ascent to the Father. His disciples deserted him at his passion, but now he calls them brothers. Despite them deserting him, he had not deserted them. During the Last Supper, Jesus said to his disciples, "No longer do I call you servants ... I call you friends." But now, he says: "I no longer call you friends ... I call you brothers". If Eve, the first parent, brought the disastrous news to Adam, Mary now brings the good news of redemption to the disciples.

Do we recognise our brother Jesus not only in our prayers and in the reception of the Holy Eucharist but also when he walks by our side in the lives of our brothers and sisters around us and in the ordinary events and circumstances of life?

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