

PRAY Risen Jesus, your resurrection awakens us to a new way of being, an eighth day of creation that is life we share with you. We live in the light of your life. Help us recognize you in our midst as we love one another. Amen.

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SPIRIT

“Where were you?” Those were Mother’s first words when I got home, not, “How was your day, honey?” or “Did your geometry problems turn out right?” She lay resting on the couch with the gold and green afghan over her. “I counted on you to vacuum after school and peel potatoes,” she said.

“One night I don’t come right home and clean and peel potatoes and wash a load of clothes and correct your math worksheets and you yell at me,” I snapped back.

“I have to count on you, Carly.”

“I was talking to Steph.”

“You can vacuum now.”

“My favorite occupation.”

“Carly, I don’t appreciate your attitude. My study club is coming.”

“So is mine. Steph is going to do geometry with me.” I clomped up the stairs to my room with my books. Steve followed me.

“She’s going to die, Stupid,” Steve told me, once we were both in my room. His voice was angry.

“That’s not true!” I said, horrified.

“The doctors told her and Dad at the clinic last month,” Steve said. “She could live six months or three years. They don’t know. The main ducts of her liver don’t work. The liver doesn’t take the impurities out of her blood. That makes her tired.”

“Why didn’t anybody tell me? I thought she hated me.”

“Are you kidding? You’re her baby, her lollipop. Maybe she takes it out on you a little.”

That was March. The last week in August Mother had me gather her school stuff in boxes and help get her classroom ready for the first day of school. She didn’t say much as we drove over.

The color of her skin had darkened all summer but not from the sun. Steve said it was because the liver didn’t take the bile out of her bloodstream. Sometimes the poison in her blood made her get mixed up. She was always cold and wore a sweater even when it was 90 degrees in the shade.

“Make the background of the bulletin boards yellow,” she told me when we got to her room in the deserted school.



A DAY I WANT TO

DIDN'T BEGIN

by Joan Mitchell, CSJ

I put up yellow construction paper, then cut out different leaf shapes in fall colors, and pinned them on the yellow background.

"The kids can press real fall leaves and add them to the board," Mother said as she admired my work from her desk.

"You can take them on a field trip to look for flowers, too."

Mother didn't answer. I turned around. She sat staring into space.

"Mom?"

"You have to drive us home."

"I'm 15. I don't have a license."

"You have to."

I walked with Mother slowly to the car, helped her in, and drove home. I had taken behind-the-wheel training. When we got home, she lay down on the couch in her usual spot under the gold and green afghan.

Moments blur together like snapshots in a wild collage after this. I heard Dad and Steve come in the back door from milking and thump down the stairs to clean up. I went to the living room to see if Mother wanted to get up for supper. She sat looking dazed on the edge of the couch. She stood before I could get to her and crumpled to the floor.

"Dad!" I screamed. I knelt beside her. She kept saying angry sounding words I couldn't understand. Her brown eyes stared wide and straight ahead; the white was deeply yellow, almost green. Dad and Steve came and lifted her back on the couch.

"Get the car, Steve," Dad ordered and pulled the afghan around mother. "I'll call 911. We'll meet them in town. I'll call Doc and Father Murphy. Carly, stay with your mother."

Fifteen long minutes later, my life as a child was over. Mother kept struggling and shifting. I put my hand on her forehead and stroked her hair as she had done for me when I was sick. I put my arm around her to keep her on the couch. She kept saying words that didn't make sense and churning around. *Why did they leave me here?*

Mother's forehead felt clammy. She started to swear and cuss which she never did much and locked onto my arm with her hand. A smell made me look down. Mother had messed herself as she fell to the floor right where I was kneeling.

Dad came pounding down the stairs carrying a pail of soapy water and Mother's good nightgown. "Help me clean her up, Carly," he said. "She'd hate going to the hospital like this."

SUNDAY GOSPEL

Easter/2nd Sunday of Easter

Jesus is risen.

NARRATOR 1: Early in the morning on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb. She saw that the stone had been moved away, so she ran off to Simon Peter and the other disciple (the one Jesus loved) and told them:

MARY MAGDALENE: The Lord has been taken from the tomb! We don't know where they have put him.

NARRATOR 2: At that, Peter and the other disciple started out on their way toward the tomb. They were running side by side, but then the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first.

NARRATOR 1: He did not enter but bent down to peer in, and saw the wrappings lying on the ground. Presently, Simon Peter came along behind him and entered the tomb.

NARRATOR 2: He observed the wrappings on the ground and saw the piece of cloth which had covered the

head not lying by the wrappings, but rolled up in a place by itself.

NARRATOR 1: Then the disciple who had arrived first at the tomb went in. He saw and believed.

NARRATOR 2: Remember, as yet they did not understand the scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead. The disciples returned to their homes.

NARRATOR 1: Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look inside and saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and one at the feet.

ANGEL: Woman, why are you weeping?

MARY MAGDALENE: They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.

NARRATOR 2: She turned and saw Jesus standing there but did not know it was he.

JESUS: Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?

MARY MAGDALENE: Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.

JESUS: Mary!

MARY MAGDALENE: Teacher!

JESUS: 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."

NARRATOR 1: Mary went and announced to the disciples.

MARY MAGDALENE: I have seen the Lord.

John 20.1-18

Mother was floppy in Dad's arms. I bathed her clean and helped get her arms in and out of her sleeves. He carried her to the car, one of her arms flopping outside his reach.

"Stay here and call your sisters," Dad said, as he eased Mother into the backseat of the car my brother held open. "I'll send Steve back when we get to the hospital."

I had to try a dozen numbers to find my sister Jan, who had gone just two weeks earlier to intern in a hospital half a continent away. I cleaned the rug.

At the hospital saline IVs flushed out Mother's bloodstream, and she was herself again. My sisters came home. We had fun together around her bed. She ate red Jello and thought it tasted as good as German chocolate cake. But the poisons her liver couldn't take out kept creeping into her system. The doctor sent her by ambulance to the university hospital 100 miles away. We took turns being with her.



Once I was there alone. Mother's dark hair and dark, sallow skin stood out against the white pillow and sheets. Sometimes she dozed and sometimes awoke.

"No one will come with me," she said waking and looking at me. "I told the mailman that I'm scared, but he won't come. I have to go alone."

I knew she was talking about dying even if the poisons in her blood made her say it funny.

"You've loved us kids," I said. Why I said that I don't know. It wasn't an answer, but I wanted her to know. But for once it was the right thing. Knowing I loved her eased her fear. Mother nodded and smiled. I stood beside her. Her head trembled, so I held it still and stroked her hair again.



The day I saw a blood transfusion running into her arm I knew she wasn't going to get better. The poison was slowly eating away the walls of her veins. She got slowly more beautiful as she got sicker. Even Steve thought so. It was as if the illness took away everything that wasn't really who she was.

Once a nurse brought her tea. She sat up and took a sip. "I can taste it!" she said. "Thank you. You are so kind to bring it to me."

Drinking the warm tea was an event. I suppose something real, like home, not another needle.

Once I was alone with her again, and she started to throw up. I punched the nurses' button desperately for help. *I will faint*, I thought. But I didn't. I put the metal tray to her mouth and held her head as she threw up the blood that was slowly seeping from her veins inside.

Finally Dad, my sisters, Steve, and I sat beside her bed through the night. Mother was unconscious. We watched her face and watched her breathe. Her blood pressure barely registered when the nurses took it.

At five in the morning we left the room to plan the day, who would stay and who would sleep. When we came back, a nurse came out and looked us each in the eye. We went in knowing we'd find her dead.

Mother's skin was the color of old ashes. Her mouth hung fixed and open in an ugly way. Her eyes were closed. Dad walked around the bed

and placed his huge farmer hand flat on her breast over her heart.

"She's still warm," he said. He didn't want to let her go.

I sat in the back seat as we drove home, 100 miles along a highway I thought dropped off the edge of the earth. The familiar hills looked like people rolled over in lumpy blankets against the first light of a day they didn't want to begin.

Three days later we stood around her wooden coffin at her grave. Evergreen trees circled the cemetery. Our fields lay just beyond. The dirt piled beside her grave looked the same as the dirt I helped work in the fields, the same as the dirt in the garden I helped Mother plant.

We prayed, blessed the coffin, then lowered it into the grave. Our priest took a shovel and threw a scoop of dirt into the grave. Dad did the same, then each of us. It was misting gently. I took this moment as a planting.

QUESTIONS

1 How does sickness affect Carly's relationship with her mother?

2 What will last in their relationship? 3 How Christian is Carly's understanding of her mother's burial as a planting? 4 Why do you suppose Mary Magdalene is known as the apostle to the apostles?

Hint: *Apostle* means *one who is sent*.

Jesus' resurrection

What hope does it give us?

Like every human, Jesus dies. Like every human, he dies having to entrust himself to God. In the passion story he feels alone and forsaken. He cries out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

Unlike every human, Jesus rises from the dead. Jesus changes the meaning of death; it cannot hold him. He shows us that death is a journey into life with God. Jesus does not take death away but goes through it.

Jesus' death/resurrection is the founding event of Christianity. Jesus' death is inseparable from his resurrection.

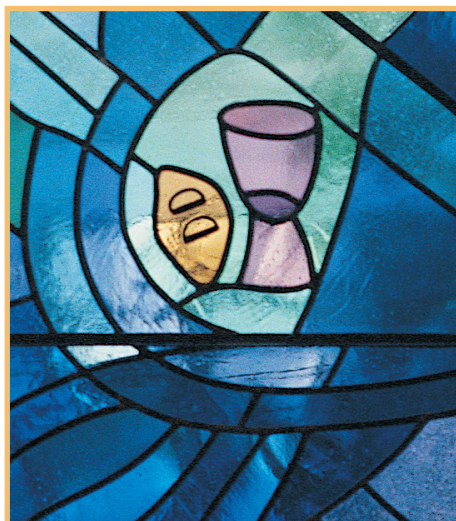
The word resurrection means waking. What is resurrection? Resurrection is not resuscitation. Jesus does not simply come back to life just the way he was. His resurrection has transformed his body. His divinity permeates and shows through his body.

Most Easter appearance stories happen when Jesus' friends gather together. Jesus teaches that "where two or more gather in my name, there I will be in the midst of them" (Matthew 18.20).

Jesus' death and resurrection happen at Passover in springtime. The Church celebrates Easter in springtime. We believe the Creator who gives life to the earth is the same God who raises Jesus to new life and whom we trust to raise us up.

We have other experiences that hint at resurrection besides new life in nature. One is memory. Our relationships with those we love who die indeed continue. Those we love live within us in our memories and in the ways they have made us who we are.

Nothing tests our Christian faith like the death of people we love. We don't know what life in the fullness of God is like. We have no scientific proof God raised Jesus from the dead. We have only the witness of his friends, who committed their lives to spread his message and often died for him.



At Masses of Christian Burial, the priest sprinkles the coffin with holy water and prays:

All of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death. By baptism into his death we were buried together with him, so that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might live a new life.

How does Jesus abide with us after his resurrection? He sends his Spirit. He leaves us signs of his presence. Jesus appears on Easter evening to the whole company of his disciples. He brings them peace and sends them to continue his mission. He breathes on them and says, "Receive the Holy Spirit." Breath is invisible and life-giving like the Spirit. Jesus also gives the community the power to forgive one another. This Spirit-filled, forgiving community is one sign of Jesus' continuing presence.

At the last supper Jesus made bread and wine signs of his Body and Blood, of his life given for his friends. To this day Jesus' follower gather for this meal that nourishes their commitment to live and love as Jesus did.

In gathering together for eucharist, we nourish our identity as the community

The mission of Christ and the Holy Spirit is brought to completion in the Church, which is the Body of Christ and the temple of the Holy Spirit.

Catechism of the Catholic Church #737

that continues to make God's love for all people visible in our world. We cannot follow Jesus without continuing his work of nourishing the hungry and of pouring out our lives to lift up the lowly.

Our mission as baptized and confirmed Christians is to be Christed people. Our mission is to become the body of Christ in the world, his hands and feet, his eyes and head, his heart and spirit. Our mission is to live in the promise of Jesus' new life in us.

FAITH in ACTION

- 1 Journal and reflect on key faith questions, such as: Where am I on my faith journey? Who is God to me? How do I pray? How is the Spirit prompting me to use my gifts for the common good? How do I witness that I am a Christian?
- 2 Plan skits for your group in which three teens interview another teen who takes the part of one of the first believers in the Easter gospel—Mary Magdalene, the beloved disciple or Peter.
- 3 Make an Easter banner for your classroom, teen meeting area, or parish church. Express your understanding of the meaning of resurrection.
- 4 Talk about any experience members of your group or class have had of someone close dying. What do you believe about this person's life with God?