

by Joan Mitchell, CSJ

Place a bowl of water at the center of your group. Surround it with plants, spring flowers, or symbols. Sing the following verses of “O Sons and Daughters,” which tells the Easter story.

Refrain: *Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.*

*That Easter morn at break of day,
The faithful women went their way
To seek the tomb where Jesus lay.
Alleluia. Refrain.*

*An angel clothed in white they see
Who sat and spoke unto the three
“Your Lord has gone to Galilee.”
Alleluia. Refrain.*

LEADER: Are you not aware that we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?

ALL: Through baptism into his death we were buried 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.

*One person passes the bowl of water.
Each makes the sign of the cross
with the water.*

“I have seen the Lord,” Mary Magdalene announces to the community of Jesus’ disciples when she returns from encountering her Teacher on Easter morning. Jesus sends her as the apostle to the apostles to tell them, “I am going to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.” We share Jesus’ relationship with God. That’s a wow.

SUNDAY

by SUNDAY

In Mark’s gospel Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joses, and Salome find the tomb empty and hear from a young man in white that Jesus is risen. In the other three gospels Mary Magdalene is first to encounter Jesus risen and first to announce the good news to the other disciples. She is the apostle to the apostles, the first to believe in Jesus risen.

“I have seen the Lord.” Her five words of testimony invite us to reflect about where and in whom we have seen the Lord. Faith in Jesus continues today because people keep living the gospel. We can see the Lord in their lives.

Personally I am a late comer to relationship with Jesus. It is



creation that awakened me to divine presence in the world—in the flowering ditches of my childhood and the meadows of mountain hikes. It is the wonder of seeds sprouting, rooting, growing, multiplying that grounds my faith. In my deepest adult experience of God it is the Spirit I found underlying my existence, affirming I was okay.

In the liturgical year over time, I have met Jesus in every gospel. This Sunday and in every Eucharist we invite Jesus to easter in us, his brothers and sisters.

Now that I am older and go to funerals for family and friends more frequently, I see the Lord in lives lived long and slowly, lives poured out over years of days for spouses and children, for the good of neighbor and the common civic good.

● In whom do you see the Lord?



GOSPEL

The beloved disciple sees and believes.

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.

John 20:1-9



Many want to identify the beloved disciple with John, the writer of the gospel. However, the gospel deliberately describes this person with words that fit every disciple—a way to draw us into the story and invite us to see and believe.

The gospel for Easter Sunday doesn't finish Mary Magdalene's journey to faith. She stays at the empty tomb, grieving, crying, and meets a man whom she thinks is the gardener until he speaks her name. She hears her name, recognizes her teacher, and believes. Jesus explains that he goes "to my God and your God, to my Father and your Father" (John 20:29). We believers are brothers and sisters who share Jesus' relationship with God, his Father.

Jesus sends Mary Magdalene to be the apostle to the other apostles. She returns to the whole company of Jesus' disciples to announce, "I have seen the Lord."

● What feelings do you experience at the empty tomb? Guilt? Fear? Ecstasy? Immediate faith? Hesitancy? Blinding grief?

● What grounds your faith in Jesus' resurrection and the promise of our own?

The Easter gospel calls us to faith.

On Easter Sunday we read the Easter story from John's gospel. Mary Magdalene sets in motion the Easter gospel when she goes to the garden to visit Jesus' tomb and finds the tomb open and empty.

The time is the dawn of a new day in creation, an eighth day. Death proves not the end for Jesus though fear, cruelty, power, and violence have had their way with him as they have had their way with many in our world. The same God who begins life and sustains life raises Jesus to new life.

Mary Magdalene runs to bring Peter and the beloved disciple to the empty tomb. Both disciples see the same evidence. Peter hesitates. The beloved disciple enters the tomb, sees it empty, and believes. This disciple makes the ideal response. Ending the Easter Sunday gospel with this disciple's response calls us to follow his example—to come, see, and believe God's glory revealed in Jesus' resurrection from the dead, the vision and promise of our own life with God.



The good news of Jesus' resurrection has travelled through people proclaiming and living the gospel for 21 centuries. Our world is global now. The spring awakening of earth hints of the mystery of Easter in the northern half of Earth. In the southern hemisphere Christians celebrate Easter without the great budding and sprouting that goes on in the north.

Our story of creation now is much longer and more involved than Genesis describes, a process that unfurls over 13.7 billion years and continues today. Theologian John Haught suggests, "We should no longer think of God having a plan but instead a vision that aims at bringing into being a community of love."

Thinking of our holy history as a vision rather than God's set plan allows for our human freedom and recognizes we participate in co-creating with God. We are part of the evolving web of life and have

the capacity to transcend ourselves and become more than we are. We recognize the Spirit endows the whole cosmos with the capacity to transcend itself toward ever new forms.

- What vision for the cosmos do you experience in celebrating Easter?
- What is your understanding of redemption?

Mary Magdalene brings the whole community of Jesus' followers the good news, "I have seen the Lord." Easter testifies to the power of God's love. Jesus' resurrection testifies to the impossible coming to be. Every dawn testifies to the giver of

our lives, the Holy Spirit, calling us into song like the birds, calling us into deeper roots like the bulbs, calling us with poet Gerard Manley Hopkins to recognize Easter is a verb.

We Christians welcome Jesus to easter in us. What Jesus has done for us in giving himself wholeheartedly we must do for one another. We weave with our love each day a community of love in our world.

- How are Jesus and his Spirit eastering in you?
- When and to whom do you proclaim Jesus' resurrection and promise of new life?
- What new life will you keep on cultivating in the Easter season?

DO SOMETHING

CHARITY **JUSTICE**

- Gardening is a wonderful intergenerational activity, especially for older people who love to garden and teens who want to learn. Where might you begin a community garden? Consider raising vegetables for the food shelf.

God raised Jesus up.

Sunday's first reading from *Acts* contains one of the several sermons Luke composes for his account of the first years of the Church. In this passage Peter speaks to the Roman centurion Cornelius and his household in whom he has just witnessed the Spirit poured out.

In this sermon Peter proclaims in short form the same narrative plot and message we know in expanded form in the four canonical gospels. Jesus' ministry begins with the preaching and baptism of John the Baptist. Jesus from Nazareth preaches, heals, and cast out demons all over Galilee. Peter and the other disciples are the witnesses to Jesus' death and to his resurrection to new life.

In *Acts* the eyewitnesses to all Jesus did and taught become apostles—missionaries. The risen Jesus commissions them to spread his good news.

From Fire to Fire



Go to our website—goodgroundpress.com—and click on *From Fire to Fire* for ways to celebrate the seven weeks between Easter and Pentecost. For daily prayers, click on Prayer of the Day.

We are witnesses.

“You know what has been told all over Judea about Jesus of Nazareth, beginning in Galilee with the baptism John preached—how God anointed him with the Holy Spirit and power. He went about doing good and healing all under the power of the devil because God was with him. We are witnesses to all that he did in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They killed him finally, ‘hanging him on a tree.’

“God raised him on the third day and allowed him to appear, not to all, but to us who were chosen by God as witnesses, by us who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. He commissioned us to preach to the people and to bear witness that he is the one whom God has sent as judge of the living and the dead. To him all the prophets testify, saying that everyone who believes in him has forgiveness of sins through his name.”

Acts 10.34,37-43

- If you could quiz Peter as a witness of all Jesus said and did, what would you want to ask him?
- What sense of your life and experience does Jesus' death and resurrection make?
- What witness do you give in your own life to the truth of the gospel?

PRAY

LEADER: Today is a new day of creation God has made. May we see with Easter eyes the beauty of spring and nurture the new life in our relationships. May we open our ears to the experience of people who suffer in our world and respond with compassion.

ALL: May we witness with our lives that God lives.

LEADER: May our hearts welcome people of every kind into our circles.

ALL: May we witness with our lives that God lives.

LEADER: Every day is a new day God has made.
ALL: Let us rejoice and be glad. May the risen Jesus breathe on our minds and open our eyes that we may know him in the breaking of bread, in all of us who gather together around his word and table. Amen.

Sprinkle the group with water and exchange a sign of peace.



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