



Easter Morning Mass – A, B, C
April 4, 2021
John 20:1-10

Background on the Gospel:

At the Easter Vigil each year we hear the Gospel of the respective Synoptic evangelists (Matthew in year A, Mark in year B and Luke in year C). Easter morning the Church invites us to contemplate the Easter mystery of the empty tomb through the eyes of John.

As always, John's treatment of the story is greatly different than the other three Gospels. The Passion in John shows Jesus already majestic and glorious in the arrest, trial and crucifixion; in a sense there was no need to tell the story of Resurrection. In the very way Jesus died the Church had been born at the foot of the cross and sacraments of Baptism, and Eucharist foreshadowed in the blood and water flowing from His pierced side. The wounds are a revelation of victory, not a sign of weakness. What remained for John to address were two things: the consequences of the completion of the "hour" for Jesus and the consequences of His glorification for believers of all times.

John's account of Resurrection emphasizes the action of the Father: the stone had been taken away (passive verb here – by whom? God!). The linen cloth and face covering are "placed and folded" (again the passive). Jesus has been raised by the Father.

John's Gospel had emphasized a "journey of faith" with different responses: *non* faith (rejection by the Jews), *partial* faith (Nicodemus and Samaritan woman) and *true* faith (Mother of Jesus and John the Baptist). Now we see the "journey" (literally) of the Beloved Disciple, Peter and Mary Magdalene to and from the tomb.

The Beloved Disciple is singled out in our Easter morning Gospel as the "hero" because he saw the signs (clothing left neatly wrapped, especially the face covering in a place by itself) and he believes. He does not need to see the risen body and he did not yet have the Scriptures for reassurance; he understood love and was so accepting that he knew Jesus had been raised! Mary Magdalene and Peter would require direct contact and conversation before they could believe.

Thoughts for prayer and reflection:

- 1) *For John – as distinct from the Synoptics – the Passion and Resurrection flow together seamlessly. In fact from the beginning of John's Gospel Jesus' divinity is clearly radiant. His relationship to the Father is never in question; rather, it became more and more obvious that He is the beloved Son. In a sense the "beloved disciple" understands the mystery unfolding – as it is happening – because his love is so intense and trusting. Peter, Mary Magdalene and the others are still caught up in their own emotions, desires and needs. The "beloved" is always in a position to "receive." Meditate on the special gift the Beloved enjoyed; pray for the grace to be a "perfect receiver." After all, even Jesus received Resurrection! It was the Father's gift/action.*

- 2) *Think about Mary Magdalene's anxiety and shock at finding an empty tomb and her run to find Peter and the "other" disciple. Do you identify with her stressful state of mind and heart? Her question is logical and pertinent: Where is Jesus??*
- 3) *Peter runs quickly and looks in the tomb; he sees what the Beloved also saw but does not reach any conclusion or conviction of faith. Was he held back perhaps by shame and sorrow? Think about all the different types of people who will be participating in Easter services (or not at all): what/how do they meet Jesus and discover the gift of Resurrection with its hopeful vision?*
- 4) *What do you want/need from the Risen Jesus this year in the midst of unending pandemic?*