

HOMILY for EASTER SUNDAY – Year ABC

This Easter Sunday's Gospel tells us about the empty tomb of Jesus when Mary Magdalen went out to visit. She thought someone had moved His body. Reflecting on it, I'm reminded of this new cute story that I'd like to share with you.

A young entrepreneur was alarmed at the card he received at the opening of his new store. Along with some beautiful flowers, there was a card that read: "In Deep Sympathy."

Just then, the telephone rang. It was the florist wanting to apologize for sending the wrong card.

"No problem at all," said the entrepreneur. "These things happen."

"I accidentally sent your card to a funeral," the florist explained.

"Well, what did it say?" asked the entrepreneur.

"Congratulations on your new location," came the florist's reply.

Anyway, throughout Lent, we tried to make some personal sacrifices & walk the journey of the Cross with Jesus. During the Triduum, we had the Last Supper with Him & followed Him all the way to the foot of the Cross on Good Friday. Watching our Lord suffer & die on the Cross was not easy for the early disciples. Have you ever lost a loved one before?

Losing a loved one or saying goodbye to a relationship is never easy. For that loved one was an important part of our lives. That memorable relationship meant a lot to us. It would be sad & difficult for us to lose that loved one or relationship. That is how the early disciples felt after the sudden departure of Jesus. For they spent so much time with Him & witnessed lots of wonderful things together. They saw how Jesus healed the sick & fed the hungry; & they wanted those miraculous experiences to last a bit longer. They wished that Jesus would still be around to give them another lesson on prayer or tell them one more parable on how to be a good neighbor. But, what they missed the most about their master Jesus was how real He was in their daily life. He fed the hungry crowd & healed on affliction after another. He reached out to the outcast & brought back one sinner after another, something that they did not see a typical religion would do. Jesus was indeed the Messiah whom the people of God had long awaited for.

Like the early disciples, we need someone like Jesus to help us deal with our daily challenges & show us the way to true happiness & peace. One of the problems that our world is facing now is mental health. The victims of this problem often feel overwhelmed by their daily challenges & do not have any tools to deal with them. The mental health problem is exasperated by a secular world, which has fooled people to think that faith or religion is useless. In fact, our Catholic faith has got a bad wrap & horrible coverage for its few bad apples despite countless wonderful things it has done for the human family throughout the world in the last two thousand years. Truthfully the Catholic faith has taught the world to follow a life of virtues & practice prayerful meditations every day to foster a healthy mental & spiritual life. So, if someone truly lives out the Catholic faith, the person would have a good spiritual life and not suffer mental health problem. That is why people have continued to search out for the Catholic faith & its leader Jesus. Among those people have been Mary Magdalene, Peter, & John. These early disciples remind us about the treasure & blessing that Jesus & the Catholic faith would bring them. They have found true peace & happiness in Jesus. That is why they ran to the tomb

to re-claim that treasure & blessing for themselves early in the morning. We should do the same & re-claim that treasure & blessing at Jesus' tomb for ourselves today.

When Mary Magdalene ran to the tomb, she simply wanted to show her love & remembrance of her Lord Jesus. For she was at the foot of the Cross with His mother Mary & other disciples to receive His dead body. She was also at the tomb when they left His dead body & rolled the heavy stone to close it. She did not have any thought about Jesus' resurrection or hope that she would see him again. She simply wanted to show Him how much she missed Him, especially after He helped drive several evil spirit out of her & blessed her with a new life. To her surprise, she found the heavy stone was rolled away & the tomb was empty. How would she make sense out of all that?

Here is how this Sunday's Gospel reports that incident for us: "...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 & the other disciple (the one Jesus loved) & told them, 'The Lord has been taken from the tomb. We don't know where they have put Him!' At that, Peter & the other disciple started out on their way toward the tomb." So, evidently Mary Magdalene thought that someone had moved the body of her Lord to a different tomb. It never dawned on her that Jesus had risen & everything He prophesized before would now come true. Conventional wisdom might want to focus on one definite proof to show that Jesus really rose from the dead. But, our Catholic tradition tells us that Jesus would appear to many disciples under various circumstances throughout Easter season & let them draw their conclusion about His resurrection. I will let you do the same as we would recall all the stories of the risen Christ during the upcoming Easter season.

Each disciple had his/her own reactions once he/she had an encounter with the risen Christ. Mary Magdalene wanted to embrace the risen Christ when she met Him again. Doubting Thomas was almost speechless & could only say, "My Lord & my God" when the risen Christ appeared to Him & other disciples in a locked upper room. The two disciples on the way to Emmaus wished that they would be more excited & enthusiastic about their encounter with the risen Christ as they saw Him again & decided to continue being His disciples. All in all, the resurrection of Christ brought them hope & reignited their belief in Him. It also gave them courage to go out & preach about the risen Christ & His Good News despite all sorts of challenges & persecutions. So, what does the Easter miracle mean to us? I pray that it will bring us at least hope as it tries to point us beyond this life. It wants us to dream about our own resurrection & the eternal life in the Heavenly Kingdom. So, whenever we have a hopeful spirit & help others find hope in their lives, we show the world that the Easter miracle is well & alive.

My dear brothers & sisters, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb early in the morning because she loved Jesus & was devoted to Him. She wondered how she could survive in this world without Jesus. She was surprised by the empty tomb; & Jesus blessed her to be the first disciple to experience the Easter miracle & gave her hope to continue His mission. We need to keep on celebrating the Easter miracle by following a life of hope & being a sign of it to the world around us.