

“No body now but ours”

April 2009

Hymn “We shall go out with hope of resurrection” VU 586

Scripture *“Woman,” he said, “Why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?”*
Thinking he was the gardener she said, “Sir, if you have carried him away tell me
where you have put him, and I will get him.” Jesus said to her, “Mary”. She
turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, “Rabboni”.
Jesus said, “Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet returned to the father. Go
instead to my brothers and tell them, ‘I am returning to my father and your father,
to my God and your God.’” John 20:15-17

Prayer Let us pray – O God, sometimes we look for you in our abandoned dreams, in the things that might have been. Today, when we take time to look, we may see your face and hear your voice in the gardener, or the grocery clerk, or other unexpected people. We may feel new life, and new hope, and new beginnings through an unknown source. Help us to know you and know what you would have us do to make Easter happen in the world today. Amen.

Lesson It is early Easter morning and Mary Magdalene is in conversation with her risen teacher but she doesn't recognize him until he speaks. It's apparent that something has changed. Then he tells her she cannot touch him – “Do not hold on to me,” he says. She cannot continue the personal, individual relationship she used to have. She must now seek a relationship with Jesus' spiritual brothers and sisters, the beloved company behind the telling and the writing of this gospel.

Many of us have been taught that we should relate to, even worship the risen Christ. Stained glass windows and paintings portray the risen Christ, ruler of all, on a heavenly throne. Keeping Easter need not centre on worshipping the post-Easter Jesus.

As with loved ones who have entered into the mystery of life beyond death, we may still feel a strong connection to Jesus – to who he was and what he taught us. But what matters most is not what we believe about life beyond death or about the risen Christ in particular. Like Mary Magdalene, we are not to hold on to Jesus' individual being or to whatever image we may have, pre- or post-Easter, of Christ.

The risen Christ is no longer a human being, but is found in the community of all God's people, of all God's beloved creation. Easter is not about insisting on one particular version of resurrection. It is about choosing new life in our ways of acting, caring and creating together.

Our loved ones live on as we live out the best of what they have given us. So too, Christ is alive when we embody holy wisdom and compassion, when we work for peace, justice and well-being in God's beloved world, and when we sense God's presence everywhere in one another.

What should be clear is that resurrection isn't just limited to the experience of Jesus or to however we understand a life after death, but in the passing from death to life here and now. The message of resurrection and of Easter hope is that we can live fully in this life, the life we are living as AOTS men, giving of ourselves, and risking for love's sake.

The secret to practicing resurrection is in giving who we are and what we have completely, wholly away to something greater than ourselves – in escaping from the circumstances and choices that entomb us and entering into new life here and now. In life and in death, Jesus modeled this generosity and transformation for followers then and now. As we embrace resurrection as a credible and meaningful principle for living, we, like Jesus, may become more than anyone around us – or even we ourselves – could have imagined.

Prayer-in-action Come together in a circle prayer where you each share where you see new life emerging in your lives or in the world around you. Before you part, share ideas about what you can do to help mend the world. Even small things count. Check in with each other from time to time, being an Easter community for each other.

Prayer Let us pray – Turn us on, O God. Help us to reach out for the spirit power that Jesus promised to those who follow his way. We seek this power, yet we need the Spirit in other ways as well. We need a comforter, a teacher, an enabler, so that the power is used wisely and well, to lead us into your eternal ways of truth. Amen.