

Easter Sunday

Year A, 2026

Acts 10:34a, 37-43

Col 3:1-4

Ps 118

Mt 28:1-10

Χαίρετε! *Easter greetings*

The morning of the resurrection begins somberly, heavily, with the two Marys: “*Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the tomb.*” They went to visit Jesus’s grave. They did not set out to find a living Lord. They did not go with Easter alleluias on their lips. They went simply to be near what they had lost, to confirm what they already knew – that death had claimed the one they loved.

And perhaps this is where many of us live, even today – even on this Easter morning. It could well be that we have in actual fact arranged our lives around a dead Christ, not because we are cruel or faithless, but because a dead Christ is, in a certain sense, manageable. “A dead Christ leaves the world to us.”¹ And this world, limited as it is, is at least within our reach. We know its rules, its edges. We have learned to navigate its darkness and delights and disappointments.

However, his tomb is now empty, and the angel announces to the Marys that “*Jesus the crucified...is not here, for he has been raised just as he said.*” This is astonishing, wonderful, good news. But “let us not believe too easily” or too quickly. Just because we know how things turn out, we must not skip to the end, or else we will miss something of supreme significance. Let us stay with the Marys for

¹ *From Advent to Pentecost*, p 143, quoted *passim*.

a while, to experience what they experienced. We must not rush past the stone, the fear, the incomprehension, the angel's blinding presence and straight to a comfortable Easter feeling, full of bunnies and baskets. The resurrection is so much more than a warm sentiment, so much more than a metaphor suggested by the renewal that springtime brings to nature. It is the most significant event in the history of the universe. And at first, it inspires fear:

"Do not be afraid." These are the first words spoken at Easter. The first word of the resurrection is a word addressed to grieving human hearts, a word that inspired both fear and joy. Why fear? Because they were standing at the threshold of something that did not yet have a name – and that something would rewrite the rules that had up to then guided their lives. The rolled away stone revealed more than an empty tomb. It revealed an entirely new reality, a new world, a new life. If this man is risen – truly risen, not resuscitated or returned but glorified and transformed – then the boundaries we have drawn around the world and what is possible in this world are no longer where or what we thought they were. In the resurrection, "one no longer knows where the limits of the universe are. It opens onto an abyss from all sides." In the resurrection, Jesus truly makes all things new (Rev 21:5).

This limitless newness of the risen Christ is why Easter is not first a feast of consolation, though it does console. Neither is it first a feast of joy, though it overflows with joy. Easter is first a feast of holy awe – the fearful awe of creatures who have suddenly

glimpsed that the world is infinitely larger, infinitely more alive, infinitely more dangerous with grace than they had ever dared to imagine. And because of that fearsome awe, the Marys fled the scene – *“they went away quickly from the tomb, fearful yet overjoyed, and ran...”*

A dead Christ, you see, would have been easier. Jesus still in the tomb, a closed tomb, is a beautiful teacher, a courageous martyr, a moral example to be imitated across the centuries, a memory to cherish and hold dear. A dead Christ leaves the world to us. And the world, for all its sorrow, is at least something we understand. We can bear it, suffer it, even manage to be noble within it.

But a living Christ – a Christ who is ever-present, glorified, filling all things – that changes everything. Everything. There is no corner of our lives, no wound we have hidden, no sin we have despaired of, no loneliness we have learned to call normal, that is not now touched and redeemed by the resurrection. Jesus is not there in the tomb of the past, in the grave of what was or what might have been. No, he is risen, forever beyond the snares of death, and, alive, he goes ahead of us, awaits us, just as he did for the Marys:

“And behold, Jesus met them and said, ‘Greetings!’ They came to him, embraced his feet, and did him homage.”

On the road between the empty tomb and the city, Jesus simply appeared. No trumpet. No army of angels. He met the Marys on an ordinary road, in the middle of an ordinary morning that had

begun in grief. And his first word to them was a word of greeting – an ordinary word, the kind you would say to a neighbor. He said to them, *χαίρετε*, an ordinary greeting used every day by everyone: “hello, good morning,” but which, taken literally, means “rejoice.”

Jesus did not appear abruptly and say: “See, I told you so.” He did not offer explanations; he offered himself. And then he spoke again those words – the first words of Easter, the words the angel had already given, now repeated by the Lord himself – “*Do not be afraid.*”

Do not be afraid of me, Marys. Do not be afraid of this new thing that I am. Do not be afraid of what my rising means for your dying, for your suffering, for all that you have lost. Do not be afraid, because what you are looking at is not the end of the story. I am the first morning of the true story – the morning and the story that never ends.

Let us listen as if the Lord himself were speaking now to what the resurrection means. It is as if he were saying to us: “Still you do not understand? Death, darkness, suffering, selfishness, your limitations, your weakness, your sin – all that is defeated. Once for all. I did not just return to the life I had before my death. I have passed into the Kingdom of the Father, into true life, which is eternal and indestructible, a life of love and communion, of light and praise, which is quite different from the life of your world... I

have entered into the glory of my Father, that glory which I possessed from all eternity as the Word...”

This is what is revealed on Easter morning. Easter is not a historical curiosity about an empty tomb, not a yearly ritual that we perform and then return to our everyday lives. What Easter reveals is the shape of reality itself. If Christ is risen, then death is not the last word. If Christ is risen, then love is stronger than hatred, light outshines darkness, and the deepest wounds of history are not beyond healing. If Christ is risen, then every person who has ever loved and suffered and hoped is somehow held in a life that does not end.

Jesus continues to speak to the Marys: *“Then Jesus said to them, ‘Do not be afraid. Go tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see me.’”*

Go and tell. That is the third movement of this Easter morning. The first movement: do not be afraid. The second: come and see. And now: go and tell. And so the resurrection is not a secret treasure to be hoarded nor a private consolation for the privileged few. It is something new, something good: good news – the most urgent, world-altering something new ever entrusted to human lips – and it is given to us precisely so that we might carry it back into a world that is still, this very morning, sitting near a tomb in the darkness.

There are people out there, people we know and love, who have arranged their world around the assumption that in the end, death

wins. They think themselves realists when they are really in despair. But deep within they long, with a longing they might even refuse to name, to be told, to be convinced, to come to know that the stone has been rolled away, that what they thought was lost is not lost, that the darkness they have been living in is not the whole story.

Go and tell them. Not with easy words or pious platitudes, but by the witness of a life that has genuinely encountered the risen One – a life that is no longer organized around fear, no longer imprisoned within the tight boundaries of what seems possible or plausible or reasonable, no longer content with a world whose limits are fixed and final.

The women left the tomb, Matthew tells us, with *“fearful yet overjoyed.”* Not one or the other – but both. This is the fear (the awe) of those who have glimpsed an abyss of grace they cannot even begin to understand. And it is the joy of those who know, at last and for certain, that Love is the deepest truth of the universe, that Love cannot be destroyed, that it is patient and kind, bearing all things, believing all things, hoping all things, enduring all things (1 Cor 13). Love itself suffered, died, and was buried, and has now risen from the earth and walks ahead of us into the ordinary geography of our lives, where he wills to encounter us with a word of warm greeting – χαίρετε! – bidding us rejoice.

Do not be afraid. Come and see. Go and tell. Amen. *Alleluia!*