

# **Sermon**

## **Easter Sunday Year B**

John 20:1-18

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him." Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, and the cloth that had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead. Then the disciples returned to their homes.

But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. They said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him." When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?" Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away." Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned and said to him in Hebrew, "Rabbouni!" (which means Teacher). Jesus said to her, "Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord"; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

**Prayer:** In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

**Sermon:**

I grew up a *good* Catholic boy.

Well. OK. I was a Catholic boy... and I tried to be good

I've always felt the Call.

As a boy, everyone thought I was headed for the priesthood.

The *Catholic* priesthood.<sup>i</sup>

Growing up the only Catholic females I knew, besides my Mom,

Were somebody else's Mother or a friend's sister.

I always liked those Catholic girls!<sup>ii</sup>

But, I knew that Catholic Priests don't get married<sup>iii</sup>.

I sort of knew I was going to have a hard time.

I really didn't think it through too well.

But I was ready. . . *Sort of*.

As I think about the old days, I remember lots of Catholic stuff.

Like my Mom and my sisters and other women and girls

wearing little doily things on their heads,

At Mass and in Church.<sup>iv</sup>

Never thought much about it.

Today, some say those doilies covering a women's hair,

reflected archaic, patriarchal notions of modesty.

Some say those little pieces of cloth are signs of women submitting to patriarchal authority.<sup>v</sup>

But some women and girls still wear them.

If they want to wear them, it's OK with me.

If they went away, that's also OK with me.<sup>vi</sup>

Women are a wonderful, vital and blessed part of God's Creation. We can all agree on that. But the Devil is in the details.

In our elastic society, almost nothing seems to be certain - except alienation and loneliness and over consumption<sup>vii</sup>.

Well, One Thing is certain. Now and forever.

And that's Jesus.

I know that Jesus is King of the Whole World, and of all cultures. Not just the one we live in.<sup>viii</sup>

Today, we heard about one woman's discovery, in a quiet garden, 2000 years ago, outside the big city of Jerusalem.<sup>ix</sup>

Stuff happens. Change and Life catch people by surprise.

History can pivot in an instant, on one event.

And back then, in a flash, *everything* changed. Forever.

Life is change. *That's how God rolls.*

My life changed forever almost 40 years ago.

To my happy surprise, I am a priest today because, in 1983,  
God introduced me to a wonderful Episcopal college girl,  
named Dana Conrad.

*Life is change. Because that's how God rolls.*

Our humanist modern myth leads us to think that we are,  
or we ought to be, in charge, of everything,  
I certainly hope that's not right.  
I don't think that it is.

God has His plan. God's plan won't be frustrated.  
Not by climate change, or by politics or by  
ten sinful generations, of stubborn, arrogant humanity.  
God will always have Her way!

We Americans mostly speak English today, because, in 1588,  
the much smaller English navy, defeated the Spanish Armada.  
It was the wind, they say.  
*And who controls the wind?*

2,000 years ago, the Romans horribly killed another Jewish leader.  
Thousands were crucified over countless generations.  
But that guy wouldn't let Death win.  
And because of Him, we all have a shot at eternal life!

Mary Magdalene was at the center of all that.

And we know almost nothing about.

Mary was from a town called Magadala. <sup>x</sup>

*She once had 7 demons.*<sup>xi</sup> She'd had a rough life.

No one expected much from Mary Magdalene.

I guess that's why Jesus arranged for her to be the 1<sup>st</sup> person  
to encounter him on that 1<sup>st</sup> Easter Morning.

But, she didn't recognize him by sight! She only knew his voice. <sup>xii</sup>

When I used to cowboy out West, in the spring ,

we'd spend a couple of days gathering far flung herds.

Crossing this one swollen creek, they'd sometimes get all mixed up.

It was wonderful to watch how fast 100 anxious cows

Could find their bawling babies, in a big crowd.

Those calves' voices mattered.

Our voices matter, too. God listens to us.

*Mary heard Jesus' voice, and the world will never be the same.*

They say that Faith is "the conviction of things unseen,  
and the assurance of things hoped for."

All I know is that Mary had faith, *long before faith was popular.*

There's nothing common about Mary Magdalene and her faith.

She stood by the cross, at Jesus crucifixion.<sup>xiii</sup>

She helped lay him in the tomb.<sup>xiv</sup>

And she was the first at his tomb, the next morning.<sup>xv</sup>

When the Good News came to Mary Magdalene,

she grabbed hold of it! She's never let go!

And neither should we!

*The Good News is for everyone.*

No matter who we are or where we stand,

in our ever changing social hierarchy.

*The Good News is for everyone.*

No matter how much we have or don't have.

*The Good News is for everyone.*

We must never let go!

Grab hold of the Good News.

Live your life, like life really matters. Because it does.

*Love others*, like that love really matters. Because it does.

The Good News is for everyone. Remember that.

Shout it from the roof tops. *Never let it go!* **-AMEN**

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<sup>i</sup> In the early 1970's, I had no idea about other options. I'd never heard of an Episcopalian.

<sup>ii</sup> Something about those Catholic school plaid skirts!

<sup>iii</sup> Still don't!

<sup>iv</sup> Based on a debated understanding of St. Paul's letters and on common practice.

<sup>v</sup> They were eventually allowed to read in Church.

<sup>vi</sup> Is it Tradition? Or is it Modesty. Or is it Beauty. Some scholars suggest that in the Church's 1<sup>st</sup> century, women often wore jewels and baubles of precious metals, in their hair, to show their wealth or influence. It is suggested that, by covering those things with scarves, such wealthy, influential women, voluntarily (and theoretically, humbly) submitted to worship with commoners.

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<sup>vii</sup> In fact, lately instead of fussing about modesty and head coverings at Mass, folks are fussing about what it means to be a woman or a man. Oh, don't worry. We aren't going to try to settle that issue, today.

<sup>viii</sup> If those scarves really are about modesty, what is the masculine equivalent? Shouldn't men be modest, too? What would that look like?

<sup>ix</sup> Translated, Jerusalem, aka, Yerushalaim (Biblical Hebrew, [ירושלם]), ironically means "City of Peace".

<sup>x</sup> If she was from Texas today we might call her Mary Beltoneen, or Mary Killeenaneene. *Kind of a mouth full.*

<sup>xi</sup> Back then, 7 was the number thought to represent perfection. The world was made in 6 days, and God rested on the 7<sup>th</sup>, for example. We might say she was possessed, to perfection. See, Luke 8:2.

<sup>xii</sup> "When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?" Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away." Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned and said to him in Hebrew, "Rabbouni!" (which means "Teacher"). See, John 20:13-17.

In the midst of a huge crowd, at Disneyland, can't we hear our child's voice calling out -- even if we can't see her? For those of us who have been married for awhile, can't we always distinguish our spouse's voice.

<sup>xiii</sup> John 19:25

<sup>xiv</sup> Matt 27:57-61

<sup>xv</sup> John 20:1-2