

HOMILY
EASTER SUNDAY
The Resurrection of the Lord

March 8, 2007 – 10 AM Liturgy

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Davison, Michigan

A family was watching a movie on the life of Jesus on television. Their six-year-old daughter was deeply moved as the moviemaker realistically portrayed Jesus' crucifixion and death. Tears ran down the little girl's face as they took him from the cross and laid him in a borrowed tomb. She watched as a guard was placed outside the tomb. And then, suddenly, a big smile broke on her face. She bounced up on the arm of the chair and said with great anticipation, "Now comes the good part!"

That's why we are here today, is it not? To celebrate the good part of the last days of Jesus' pilgrimage on earth. To give thanks for Jesus' victory over sin and death. To join our voices with millions of his followers around the world this very day to sing, "Jesus Christ is Risen Today!"

I would suggest that we focus on these words from John's Gospel: "Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early in the morning, while it was still dark." In other words, she came before daybreak. John was simply reporting the facts. And yet there is another way these words might be interpreted. Darkness could refer to a world without Jesus, a world without hope, a world of sin and death, a world where God's promises had been forgotten and God's people felt forsaken. Darkness is much more than the absence of sunlight. Darkness is a spiritual condition in which the spiritual presence of God is no longer felt.

Mary Magdalene came to the tomb while it was still dark. On Friday, her master had been crucified; nails pierced his hands and his feet. A sword had been thrust into his side. Mary Magdalene saw him die a horrible death. Afterward, they laid her precious Lord in a borrowed tomb. How could this be? This was a man who had come to redeem Israel. How could this be? She could not understand. Where was God in all this?

A young boy grew up in a military family. His father would often regale him with tales of military triumphs. One day in Sunday School, the boy's teacher gave a graphic account of Jesus' death on the cross. The boy listened in astonishment. During a pause, excitedly the boy shouted, "Well, what I want to know is, where were the Marines?"

Mary Magdalene probably wondered the same thing. Where were the Marines? Or the ten thousand angels? And where was God? Was there no one to stop this terrible miscarriage of justice? The light of Mary's world had been extinguished. Mary Magdalene came to the tomb while it was still dark. That darkness was not only physical, it was spiritual as well.

Back in 1903, Guy Thornton wrote a book entitled *When It Was Dark*. It was subtitled: *The Story of the Great Conspiracy*. It graphically describes the moral collapse that would occur if the world were suddenly to discover that the resurrection of Jesus was a hoax. The climax of the novel tells us what happened the day after people heard the news that Jesus never rose. The results were horrible, although in the end, the conspiracy was exposed and the villain carried off to an asylum.

A world without Christ would be a dark world indeed. Imagine our nation with its Christian hospitals closed, its shelters for the homeless gone. Imagine people with no basis for moral decision making, families who never prayed together. Imagine a world without altars to marry our young and to bury our old. Imagine a society with no sense of spiritual purpose. Of course, some would argue that we already have such a society. How sad. Mary came to the tomb while it was still dark; but, fortunately, that is not the end of the story. When she reached the tomb, she found the stone rolled away and the body gone—vanished—the tomb, empty. "What was going on here?" she wondered. "What have they done with him?" And then it happened. As the morning unfolded, Jesus appeared to her. He spoke her name. With her own eyes, she saw the Lord.

Mary Magdalene had come to the tomb while it was still dark, but now the Son, "S-O-N," was risen. Isn't that the message of Easter when you come down to it? In the midst of darkness, the Son always rises. There is hope. There is promise. The Son of God has risen.

Mary Magdalene came to the tomb while it was still dark. But the darkness was soon overcome with light. Maybe that's the message that we need to hear this day. Perhaps, for whatever reason, you are in darkness now. Family concerns, problems at work, anxiety about your health and your future. The loss of someone you love. Easter promises us much more than stars in our darkness. Easter promises us that in the midst of our deepest darkness the Son rises to overwhelm the darkness forever.

Mary Magdalene came to the tomb while it was still dark, but the darkness did not remain. God's Son had risen. God is truly risen.