

## Reflection 1: Easter Sunday of the Resurrection of the Lord (April 4, 2021)

Today, we begin the **Easter Season**, our 50-day meditation on the mystery of Christ's Resurrection. Each of the four Gospels tells us that Jesus' empty tomb was first discovered by women. This is notable because in 1st-century Jewish society, women could not serve as legal witnesses. In the case of John's Gospel, the only woman attending the tomb is **Mary of Magdala**. We find Mary looking for the Living One in a cemetery — as a popular song says, *"Looking for love in all the wrong places..."* And yet, it is the right place, for Jesus comes to her where she is, that he might lift her up, and give her the strength and the Spirit to leave that place and move into the **new life** and direction he had in mind for her.

**Mary of Magdala** according to Luke is *a woman in the city who was a sinner* and to Fr. **Selvam** in his reflections dated 19.9.2020: *"a woman who sinned"* just like any of us; a reality that all of us must be aware of. We all knew that Mary of Magdala although a 'sinful woman,' repented, went through a radical conversion to



live the only commandment of Jesus to the full. She loved Jesus with all her heart, with all her soul, with all her mind, and with all her strength/her body *Mk.12:29-30*. It was not a dualistic love but unitive love. Her love was totally focused on Jesus. Her ego died. She was freed internally. This gave her the courage to walk behind Jesus as He went up to Calvary carrying a Cross, and she stood there at Calvary as she stood behind Jesus at the Pharisee's house. She carried her own cross, the cross of her helplessness to relieve the pain of Jesus whom she loved much. But as Mary, the mother of Jesus, stood at Calvary, Mary of Magdala also stood at Calvary without any fear.

At early dawn, **Mary of Magdala** went to the tomb to **anoint the body of Jesus**, while the disciples were distraught, frightened and hid themselves in a room. From where did this fearlessness, the courage come from? She was internally connected to herself, there was no more divisiveness in her life. **In connectedness, there is no fear.** *"There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear;"* 1 Jn. 4:18.

It is this woman who was freed by Jesus, whom she loved with 'great love,' holistic love. The experience of the **Risen Christ** was given to her, a gift indeed. It is this woman, **Mary of Magdala** who was commissioned by Jesus to take the Good News to the other apostles. She is the first missionary; she is the one as some would say 'the Apostle to the Apostles.'

## And what about you? What about us?

What is our experience of the **Paschal Mystery**? How have we experienced life, death and resurrection in our own lives? Let us feel again the pain of an experience we have had. The experience of being judged, misunderstood, rejected, condemned, humiliated, betrayed. The experience of the loss of someone close to us--perhaps a *sudden* unexpected loss, like Mary and Peter's experience of losing **Jesus**. Or perhaps the loss that came up for us was a different kind of forever loss. Perhaps it was related to a ministry or job that we loved and had to leave, or a living situation that changed, or a realization that as we grow older, we can't continue to do what we used to. Now remember: how did we experience the call to **NEW LIFE** in those situations?

On **Palm Sunday**, Jesus was being hailed and glorified; yet, a few days later his death was being called for by the same crowd. However, death did not have the final word then or now. **Mary of Magdala** had the joy of seeing Jesus resurrected, the joy of being called to **new life** by Him.

Let Mary of Magdala's experience help us to keep our own **hope alive** even during this 'Pandemic' era— the hope that we will see **Jesus** and each of our loved ones again, that whatever darkness we might be experiencing now will become a source of **NEW LIFE** for us.

*If we have joined Christ in His Passion, we can surely join with Him in His Resurrection.*



## Reflection 2: Easter Sunday of the Resurrection of the Lord (April 4, 2021)

*"Alleluia! The Tomb is Empty! Alleluia is our song."*

The beautiful words we hear every Easter. They reconnect us to the greatest of all reality. That we are not only loved, but loved so dearly and personal. **Easter** is about victory. It is about love. It is about recovery. It is about awareness. It is about restoration. It is about manifestation. Manifestation not only of God's love for us in his work of recreating (us and our situations), but most importantly manifestation of who we truly are. The tomb is empty not for Jesus, but for us. It is the victory of what is truly human, and a manifestation of the human in us that must be enhanced for the celebration of life that God offers in Christ.

**Today's Gospel helps us focus on these qualities:**

**Mary Magdalene:** The first witness of the empty tomb is not the 'expected' powerful, or the lofty spiritual. It is that faithful, common disciple. The silent yet ever present follower of the Lord. The one who had experienced the healing and liberating love of the Lord. Easter is about crossing boundaries of race, gender, and all forms of societal classifications that limit love. Jesus reached out to those beyond 'expected' boundaries, and they reached out to him in love. This Easter, do not let the boundaries keep us from experiencing and sharing love.

**Mary came:** it was early in the morning. It was still dark. But Mary came. She overcame the fear of darkness and the anxiety of what will be in order to come. To come to the tomb. There could be a lot of darkness in our lives at the moment. But like Mary, we need to let go of our fears and limitations, we have to face the darkness of our lives, be absorbed in the pain and silence of the darkness. When we enter the depth of the silence, we experience a newness. An Easter. As the beautiful prayer goes, we experience a new vision of God's glory, a new experience of God's power, a new experience of God's faithfulness and a new consecration to God's service.

**Mary came:** the deliberate desire to be charitable to Jesus even in his death is what motivates Mary to go to the tomb. Motivation is what drives us. Right or pure motive guides us to joy and happiness. Wrong motives often lead to pain and deception. Orientation of motives to right ones is a resurrection that happens to us when we are in Christ.

**Mary went to testify:** at the face of the empty tomb, Mary rushes back to share the experience. The resurrection is an experience for all. It must not be kept for a few. It must be shared. Joy is only true joy when it is shared.