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April 3, 2021

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“Mary of Magdala came to the tomb early in the morning while it was still dark” (John 20:1).

## **Easter Sunday**

The Easter Vigil in the early church may have ended near dawn, reserving the proclamation of the Gospel for the moment of sunrise. Mary’s arrival at the tomb to anoint the dead body of Jesus occurs as darkness is retreating before the light of dawn, a symbol of both the new day and her gradual realization that the Son had risen, that her teacher and beloved friend was alive.

But the fourth Gospel must first affirm the order of authority in the early church, so Mary’s moment is postponed while she races to find Peter and the Disciple Jesus loved. The chosen leader of the Apostles, still shaken by his denial and failure, is given primacy to see the empty tomb, and then the Disciple, who sees the arranged shroud and face covering, is the first to believe. What authority has yet to understand, love intuitively. Yet neither Apostle understands that Scripture signals the Resurrection. This privilege is reserved to Mary, who returns to the tomb, still filled with grief.

Her story will be told next, and its symbolism is so rich it overwhelms us. The new Adam is about to be revealed in a garden, after turning the tree of the cross into the Tree of Life. The first witness to this triumph over sin and death is a woman, who first mistakes him for the gardener. Through her tears, she hears the voice of the Master calling her name. Her love story with Jesus, faithful to his death, is the first glimpse of the New Creation. Jesus is the pioneer of our salvation, the first of many brothers and sisters who will share his victory. We are not destined to disappear like dust in the wind but were created for glory, members of the Beloved Community within the Holy Trinity.

We celebrate Easter not just because something wonderful happened for Jesus, but because what happened for him is offered to us, Life forever with God and one another. Mary, the first Apostle and preacher of the Good News, is the first one to know that “God will wipe every tear from our eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away” (Revelations 21:4).

What we take from our celebration of Easter 2021, a year of such great loss, suffering and death, is that love does overcome death, that God keeps every

promise and that those who serve others will live forever. Those who give their lives for others will rise like the day star, witnesses to the rising sun, pushing back the darkness, welcoming the dawn of new hope and renewed life. Happy Easter.

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