

## Easter Vigil- B

Mary Magdalene, Mary, the mother of James, and Salome were in for a shock as they made their way to the tomb where they saw Jesus laid.

The fact that they were bringing spices with them to anoint Jesus' body indicates that they have not grasped his entire teaching and are still unable to put together the fact of Jesus' death with the promise that he would rise again.

Even less so do they connect dying and rising in their own lives as disciples.

There's an interesting play of symbolism in the timing of their journey to the tomb. For the disciples for whom this Gospel was written, they would recognize "early in the morning on the first day of the week" as the time for the gathering of the Christian community for prayer.

It's good for us to remember that the Gospel was written for the members of the early Church.

Their question about who can they get to roll the stone away from the entrance to the tomb can stand for the larger question of "who will teach us how to enter into the death and resurrection of Jesus?" Who will teach us how to be buried with Christ in order to rise with him?"

Perhaps more than any other account of the resurrection, this one is focused on the importance of embracing the reality of the resurrection in the life of the believer.

## Easter Vigil- B

As Mark tells the story, not only is the stone rolled away, but there is a young man seated in the tomb. The one who rolls back the rock from their understanding is waiting for them.

He is going to help them with their search. They are looking for Jesus of Nazareth who was crucified. That's what they know. He is going to help them find the risen Christ who has left the tomb empty. He begins by inviting them to see for themselves that Jesus is not in the tomb.

But if he is not in the tomb, where is he? Earlier in Mark's Gospel we hear Jesus promise them, "after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee."

Galilee is the place where it all began, the place of the original preaching, teaching and healing. The following of Jesus is not over. It is beginning again, only this time with greater understanding that the full life, death and resurrection of Jesus makes possible.

The three women now need to incorporate "rising from the dead" into what they know about Jesus. His suffering and death are now seen as only a part of the story.

As much of a shock it was to see the Messiah die, now they must learn how to incorporate into their lives the truth of his resurrection.

"Rising from the dead" always seems like victory and glory for us, but for the women it was more like "stay tuned, the story continues."

## Easter Vigil- B

Even with a more complete understanding of “dying and rising” amazement and fear are parts of the journey. Maybe they are even essential to discipleship if we are going to avoid the trap of complacency and domesticating God.

Of course, the women will eventually develop into followers with more comprehension than amazement, more courage than fear, and more speech than silence.

Otherwise, there would be no Christian community. The ending of this Gospel story is not the conclusion for the community of people who read and honor it.

The story continues even unto the end of the age.

Our elect have been journeying for quite some time to arrive at this moment. They have declared themselves ready to be initiated into the death and resurrection of Christ.

And the Church has confirmed their readiness. The readiness to follow Jesus and to model their lives after his means being ready to begin again, to let go of what we know for the sake of what God still has to teach us.

After baptism the caechetical process continues with mystagogy—literally “training in the mystery.” There will be opportunities for our newly baptized to engage in that in the coming weeks, but it’s really a life-long process that even believers who were baptized as infants have to be open to.

Easter is not about restoring us to paradise. It’s not about repairing what has been damaged, although that

## Easter Vigil- B

happens. It's about new life in Christ that we can only receive if we remain open and ready to be led into the fullness of its reality.

As we make our baptismal promises for the first time, or renew them again this Easter, that's what we are doing: committing ourselves to participate in the death and resurrection of Jesus, so that we can be with him now and into eternity.

## Easter Vigil- B

1. The most unsatisfying account of the resurrection of all the Gospel accounts; like an unresolved chord.

Also the oldest? Chord was resolved with the addition of last 8 vv. of Mk. But what was the original point?

2. Gospels not a historical record, but an aid to discipleship. Read from that perspective, what aid does it give?

3. Some salient features:

- the three women are bring spices; an indication that they have not grasped Jesus' promise that he would rise again

- even less the case that they have connected the mystery of death and resurrection in their own lives; they need help with this.

- "early in the morning on the first day of the week" – the time for the gathering of the Christian assembly

- reference to the young man in white: not an angel, but one who will teach them how to enter into the death and resurrection of Jesus; how to be buried with Christ in order to rise with him.

4. So, what is the teaching?

- "He is not here." An invitation to see for themselves that Jesus is not in the tomb.

- Jesus' promise (also in Mk.): "after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee."

## Easter Vigil- B

- Why Galilee? The place where it all began, the place of the original preaching, teaching, and healing.

- Following Jesus is not over. It is beginning again, this time with greater understanding that the full story makes possible.

Invitation to the 3 women to incorporate “rising from the dead” into what they know about Jesus.

### 5. “Rising from the dead”

- we talk about it as Jesus’ victory and glory

- also like “stay tuned, the story continues.”

### 6. Discipleship is about dying and rising, too. Not once, but as the pattern of our lives.

A quote from Jesus: “Amen, amen, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat; but if it dies, it produces much fruit.”

### 7. We have to learn to be fruitful in this sort of way. It doesn’t come naturally.

### 8. Our elect have declared themselves ready to follow Christ in the giving of themselves for the sake of others.

The Church has confirmed their readiness.

Readiness to begin again, to let go of what we know for the sake of what God still has to teach us.

## Easter Vigil- B

9. Catechetical process continues with “mystagogy” – literally “training in the mystery.” How it is that dying to self can lead to life.
10. “Official” mystagogy lasts a few weeks, but really a life-long process.
11. The life in Christ and according to the pattern of his life is a reality always present as an option. Presents itself in the dying-to-self part. We trust the rising to new life will follow.
12. Making or remaking our baptismal promises: committing ourselves to participate in the death and resurrection of Jesus, so that we can be with him now and into eternity.