

# EASTER MORNING

*'Jesus said, "Do not cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father."'*

We have just heard the Easter gospel, the reading read on this day for the most of Christian history. We hear how Mary Magdalene goes in sorrow and in turmoil to where she last had sight of Jesus, the place of her last memory. Jesus, strange and unexpected, appears to her and enables her to recognise him and she says that wonderful greeting *Rabboni*, perhaps the most intimate address which is ever made to Jesus.

This is wonderful and moving, yet Jesus goes on to say the text I have just read. *'Jesus said, "Do not cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father."'* This can read as if Jesus is being a little unfair, 'why couldn't he spend a little while with Mary?' you may think.

Like anyone in mourning Mary wants the one she has lost back, as she knew him and if she cannot have that a grave will do and a grave that she can look after. She wants him for her self, and as He was to her, something very human, no doubt something very precious. But this is not resurrection; when Jesus returns, body and soul, when He returns He is not coming to give us back what we once had or what we always thought we had. If that were the case, then resurrection just be something about us.

When Jesus speaks to her He is saying this Easter changes all that. 'From now on, from the moment of this encounter with you Mary, you will not know me in truth unless you know that I am with – on the right hand – of the source of everything, the one whom we know as Father and the one who raises and gives life, not to just to you but to all those who are in this way', people just as battered as you Mary.

Indeed in this meeting, this Easter meeting with the dew still wet on the green grass, we have a very compact summary of the content of Christian faith, of baptism of Eucharist and the rest, that what Jesus gives and is, that the Father gives and is and that this is life and glory, and there is nothing more basic, nothing more solid and nothing more wonderful.

From the moment Mary is addressed by her name, Mary she knows this she is met by the One stronger than death and is now fully alive; this Jesus raised is more vivid than the Jesus she had known in Galilee or the one who had punch ups with the authorities. What Mary learns is that if she is to know Jesus, Jesus who speaks to Mary, then it is to know that this strange and wonderful truth means that you can only have love for yourself if you share it. Jesus says that I am life for you and because I am I am also for the one next to you, whether that person is red, pink or purple or has a nose ten feet long or looks like a hedgehog and smells to high heaven. And He will never give you up.

Mary when she hears that her name knows that this is true; the name Mary addressed to Mary by the Master is more than recognition, it is more like being given a stamp, a watermark as it were which identifies it as Christ's. And it is so for anyone who kneels at the altar rail and is given the Body of Christ. When you receive His Body, it is His Risen Body you are given, Jesus 'Mary' to you.

For Mary the faith the new faith means that she and we cannot have Jesus just on our terms; that the way to the Father is the way into new territory and what makes it new is this encounter in the garden; it is a way to 'new lamps...lit, new tasks begun'<sup>1</sup>. It is looking to something which will always be too big for us to hold in any one picture or view; He 'is alive and ahead of us, clearing a path to the Father's heart'.<sup>2</sup>

He is your rabboni, you are His Mary. When you receive the sacrament it is the Father's gift to you, the Son's welcome to you and the Spirit Who is working by this gift in You, His Body and His blood, His life and solidity, your name and His.

**FR. THOMAS SEVILLE CR**

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<sup>1</sup> George Bell 'Christ is the King' last verse

<sup>2</sup> Archbishop of Canterbury Easter Sermon 2004 (?)