

St. Margaret's Uniting Church, Mooroolbark

Sunday 16th April, 2017 - Easter Celebration

THE GOSPEL John 20:1-18 *Jesus Appears to Mary Magdalene*

REFLECTION ON THE SCRIPTURES

I wonder what it would look like if we allowed ourselves to be saturated by the Spirit of the Risen Christ?

There is a sense among the faithful, that only those with eyes to see can truly see the Risen One. And this makes sense of the Scriptures.

Mary Magdalene, Simon Peter, the disciple whom Jesus loved are all set to have encounters with the risen One. And those encounters are not straight-forward, like looking for a friend amongst the crowd. At first they are blind because who can see what they cannot see?

For the Mary of our story, she weeps and longs to see Jesus again. She is distressed because the tomb is empty. She is not expecting anything other than malicious work. Who would desecrate a grave and steal the body like this?

Her distress sees her in conversation with the gardener. Lamenting her loss, she hopes that he might at least be able to direct her the right way so she can continue her faithful offerings to the dead.

But just one word changes all of that. 'Mary!'

Does it surprise you that only those who loved Jesus and followed him were witness to the risen Lord? The crowd that condemned him could not see or believe in such a thing. The Chief Priests were not given an insight into the resurrection. Pilate had no such vision or sense of a new dawn.

The early church records about 500 who witnessed in some way the presence of the One who draws us here today. Although there have been witnesses since too numerous to count. But for all of us who believe, it is yet a surprise. And all encounters come because we have

dared to follow, and hoped his promises to be true, and had vision just enough to recognise when it was time for our eyes to be opened.

For some it is the familiar calling of a name, 'Mary!'. For others it is the action of bread being broken. For most of the disciples it was a mysterious in-breaking into the locked room of their fears and a breathing blessing of peace.

I wonder what we could see if we allow ourselves to be saturated by the Spirit of the Risen Christ?

One thing is for sure, we need to look beyond history, beyond a grave from 2000 years ago. *For he is not here, he is risen.* The resurrection of Jesus is not a one-off historical event but a something that has a living presence – yesterday, today and tomorrow. It is why we gather this morning. It is why we will gather again and again and again.

If we have eyes to see and ears to hear and a heart that is open we will begin to grasp the deep mystery of divine presence - Christ is born in us, Christ rises in us - if we are prepared to be bearers of the light and life of God as shown us by Jesus Christ.

It can be a difficult thing to see what we cannot even hope to see. There is a rational part of us that pulls down the shutters on the dawning of this day. How can it possibly be? And yet the invitation remains to allow ourselves to take in the Spirit of the Risen Christ, to be saturated in God's mysterious love divine.

For many of us, mystical sweet communion with our Risen Lord is beyond words or explanation. And for all struggling to take in the vastness of this day's in breaking of eternal life, we have been left with some instructions on how to saturate ourselves in the Spirit of the Risen Christ.

Do this in remembrance of me.

Like those who travelled the road to Emmaus and had a stranger break bread and open for them the presence of the Risen Lord – we so do in remembrance.

For the Sacrament of Holy Communion is a powerful, transformative means of invitation into oneness with the Risen Christ,

As we hear again the words of Jesus, 'Eat my flesh... and drink my blood' – we find an invitation into union, intimacy and communion. The host of our meal invites us to ingest the Holy, feed on the Sacred, and let the Spirit of God nourish, transfigure and raise us this day in the name of Christ.

It is an invitation to see what can be hard to see. It is an invitation to saturated by the Spirit of the Risen Christ.

Risen —Jan Richardson, from [Circle of Grace](#)

For Easter Day

If you are looking
for a blessing,
do not linger
here.

Here
is only
emptiness,
a hollow,
a husk
where a blessing
used to be.

This blessing
was not content
in its confinement.

It could not abide
its isolation,
the unrelenting silence,
the pressing stench
of death.

So if it is
a blessing
you seek,
open your own
mouth.

Fill your lungs
with the air
this new
morning brings

and then
release it
with a cry.

Hear how the blessing
breaks forth
in your own voice,

how your own lips
form every word
you never dreamed
to say.

See how the blessing
circles back again,
wanting you to
repeat it,
but louder,

how it draws you,
pulls you,
sends you
to proclaim
its only word:

Risen.

Risen.

Risen.