

Reflection April 7, 2021

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This is a week of startling appearances. The risen Jesus meets the women on the road and sends Mary Magdalene off with a message. The disciples are to meet him in Galilee. For us, that was Monday. Yesterday, there was the Gospel of Mary Magdalene weeping, desperate, and thinking that Jesus was the gardener. Again, she is sent off with a message for the brothers.

Today, we have the desolate disciples themselves. As they walk toward Emmaus, sadly reviewing the events of the week, Jesus joins them. "What are you discussing?" he asks. They don't know it is Jesus, and they don't have much patience with someone who doesn't know what has just happened. "Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know of the things that have taken place there in these days?" His reply: "What things?"

Then they begin to recount the story. This stranger really does not seem to know about Jesus. Their minds and hearts are full of the story and it is ready to pour out. In this context comes a line that I believe is one of the saddest in the Gospel. The disciples begin: "We had hoped ... we had hoped ... that he was the one who would redeem Israel."

These men had listened to the words of the prophets; they had carefully followed the words and actions of Jesus. They had begun to hope that this Jesus really was the Messiah. But a violent death was not a part of the story they imagined. And how could they understand his appearance now?

As they continue on the way to Emmaus, we are told that Jesus chided them for their slowness to believe. I must admit, I wonder how he expected them to understand. How he could say to them, "Was it not necessary that the Christ would suffer ...?" Well, I don't think it would be what I would have expected for the Christ.

The disciples beg him to stay with them and at supper he continues to unfold the story. Finally, we are told, they recognize him in the blessing and breaking of the bread. And, later, reflecting on it all, remembering Jesus, his words, and his actions, they realize who he was. They express it saying, "Were not our hearts burning within us?"

Rushing back to Jerusalem, they learn of the experience of the others. "The Lord has truly risen and has appeared to Simon." All who have seen him, want to share the story with the others. Whether it is Magdalen to the disciples or the disciples to one another, there is an urgency to share this good news of a risen Christ. And where am I in all of this?

- Am I a despondent disciple leaving Jerusalem without seeing him?
- Am I one of the women who went to the tomb and knows that he is not there?
- When have I felt my heart burning at hearing the Word?
- When have I known him in the breaking of the bread?

May we meet the risen Christ along our way today.