

Homily for April 5, 2026 | Easter John Kasper, OSFS

EASTER • 4.5.26

Acts 10:34, 37-43/ Colossians 3:1-4/John 20:1-18

Out of Darkness:

Not from the tomb, but the womb

Once, in Eden, there was a garden, and there God planted life—the fullness of life.

And the crown of creation was the earthling, the one formed from the soil, entrusted to tend the garden and delight in its beauty and goodness. So the Book of Genesis tells us.



And once, near Golgotha, there was also a garden. And in it, a tomb, where Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, secret disciples, laid the body of Jesus— anointed, wrapped, and sealed in the earth. And to that tomb in the garden came Mary of Magdala, and then, at her bidding, Peter and John—only to discover that it was empty. So the Gospel of John tells us.



Our story of creation—and our story of new creation—both begin in a garden. Many years ago, my favorite folksinger Joni Mitchell sang: *“We are stardust, we are*

golden, billion-year-old carbon... and we’ve got to get ourselves back to the garden.”

Easter proclaims something even more astonishing: not that we must find our way back, but that God has already begun to bring us forward—into a new creation.

In her shock and grief, Mary Magdalene stays near the tomb. Because love stays. Grief stays. Fidelity stays. She does not turn away from the place of loss. And it is there, in that place, that the risen Christ draws near. She sees him, but does not recognize him. She thinks he is the gardener.

What a beautiful mistake. Or perhaps not a mistake at all—but a truth she does not yet fully understand. Because the Resurrection is the dawn of a new creation. The one she encounters is indeed the Gardener—the one who brings life out of the earth, the one who transforms the place of burial into the place of promise.

And if he is the gardener, then Easter is not only something to believe— it is a garden to tend. But Mary does not recognize him at first. Easter is like that. The risen Christ is present, but not always immediately understood. He is known gradually—through longing, through silence, through the witness of others, and today for us, in the Eucharist and in the community. Jesus asks her, *“Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?”* These are holy questions. They do not dismiss her sorrow—they reveal it. The Lord doesn’t stand apart from our grief. He enters it. He stands within it.

And then—everything turns. “**Mary.**” One word. Her name. And in that one word, everything changes. This is the mercy of the Resurrection: Christ is not simply seen by the eye, but recognized by the heart. He calls us by name. He brings us from death to life, from fear to faith, from sorrow to joy. “**Rabbouni.**” Teacher. And in that moment, Mary becomes the first witness of the Resurrection. Not one of the Twelve men — but a woman who stayed, who loved, who refused to leave even when hope seemed gone. She is sent to proclaim: “***I have seen the Lord.***”



And that simple testimony becomes the first echo of what Peter will later proclaim to the world: that ***God shows no partiality, that Jesus Christ is risen, and that we are witnesses—sent to announce what God has done.*** The empty tomb is not a conclusion. It is a threshold. Christ does not rise out of the world, but deeper into it. The stone is rolled away not only from a grave, but from human hopelessness. Death has been conquered. Sin has been broken. And the new creation has begun.

And yet it begins quietly. Not with spectacle, but with a voice. Not with domination, but with love. Not by avoiding suffering, but by passing through it—and transforming it. Resurrection means that nothing given in love is ever lost— not to time, not to history, not even to death— because all of it is gathered into the risen life of Christ. And if this is true, then something in us must also rise. As Saint Paul tells us, ***our life is now hidden with Christ in God.*** We no longer belong only to the world as it is, but to the world as God is bringing it to be.

That is why Easter must be proclaimed in a world like ours. Not because the world is not wounded—but because it is. Not because suffering is unreal—but because it is not final. Not because evil is small—but because Christ’s victory is greater. So we name the darkness honestly. We name war. We name hatred. We name division. But we do not name them as ultimate.

Because the tomb is no longer only a tomb. In the light of Easter, it has become like a womb: dark, hidden, and yet bearing life. What seemed sealed becomes fruitful. What seemed finished becomes beginning. This is the birth of the new creation.

And now the question turns to us. Will we remain long enough—like Mary—to hear him speak our name? And once we have heard it, we cannot remain at the tomb. We are sent. Sent to tend the garden of this wounded world. Sent to bear witness in the midst of sorrow. Sent to say with our lives, and with our voices: “***I have seen the Lord.***” Christ is risen. He is truly risen. And because he lives, the darkness does not have the last word. The light has come— and the new creation has begun.

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