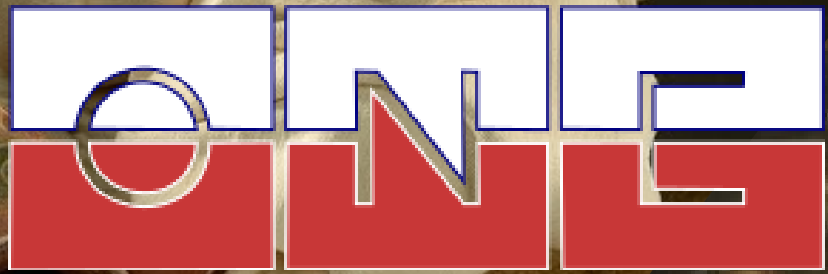


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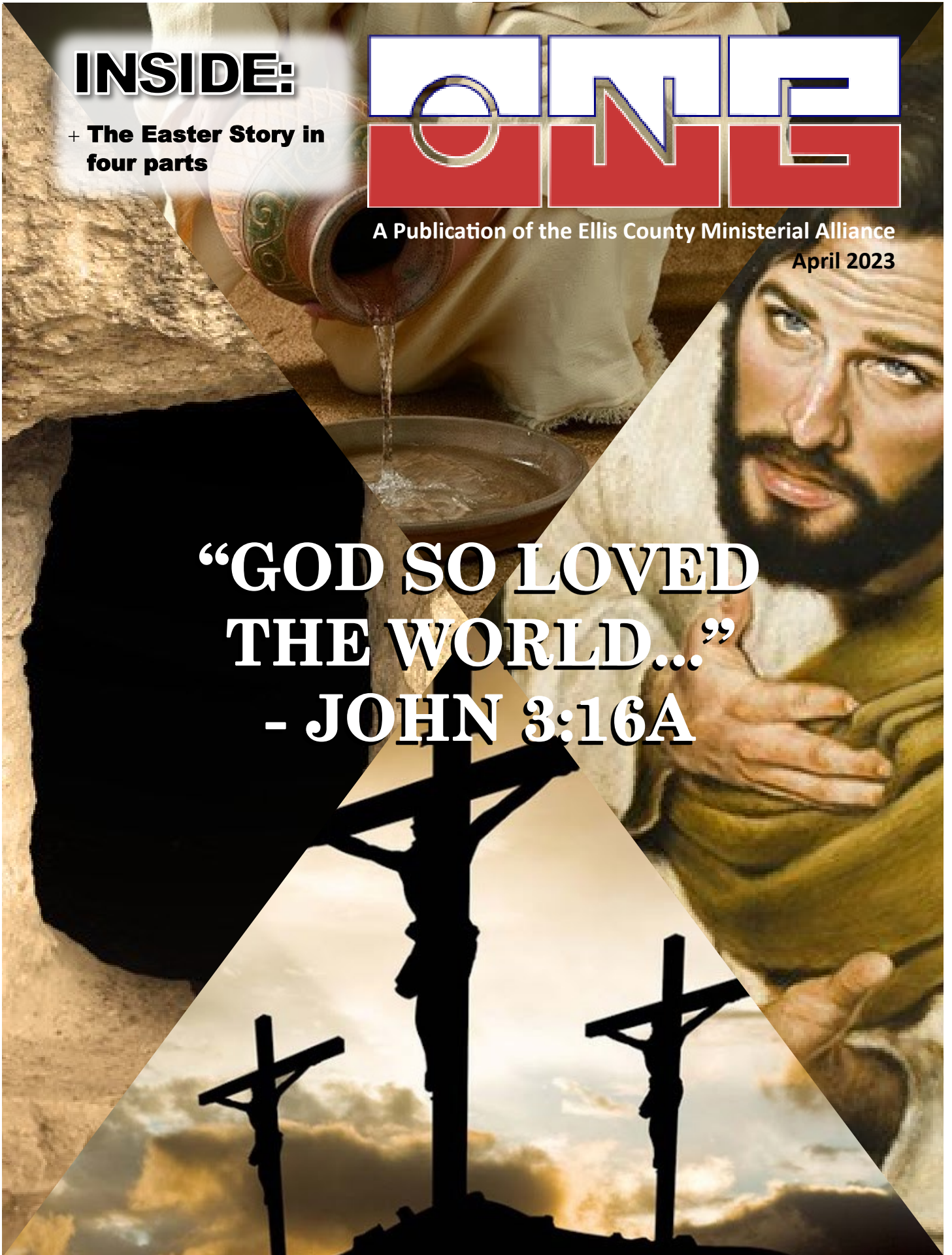
+ **The Easter Story in
four parts**



A Publication of the Ellis County Ministerial Alliance

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**“GOD SO LOVED
THE WORLD...”
- JOHN 3:16A**





ONE is the official publication of the Ellis County Ministerial Alliance (ECMA) which guides its mission, content, and theme. The ECMA encourage submissions from ECMA congregations. Photographs, stories, testimonies, and other submissions should be directed toward your church leaders or sent via email to

one@ourecma.com.

Advisory Board

Kurt Beyers
Dr. Joel Hamme
Anna Towns

Editor

Linn Ann Huntington
lhunting@fhsu.edu

The ECMA ONE Advisory Board will choose appropriate and timely submissions for publication. The columns in ONE represent the views of the author.

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Editor's Note:

This month our theme focuses on the Easter story. Our writers provide their perspectives on Jesus washing His disciples' feet at the Last Supper, Jesus praying in the Garden of Gethsemane, His conversation with the criminal on the cross, and His resurrection. All of the Scriptures come from the New Living Translation (NLT) of the Bible. We hope you and your family have a joyous Easter!

Scripture: John 13: 4-10a;12-14 (New Living Translation):

At the Last Supper—Jesus Washes the Disciples' Feet

4 So he (Jesus) got up from the table, took off his robe, wrapped a towel around his waist,
5 and poured water into a basin. Then he began to wash the disciples' feet, drying them with the towel he had around him.

6 When Jesus came to Simon Peter, Peter said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?"

7 Jesus replied, "You don't understand now what I am doing, but someday you will."

8 "No," Peter protested, "you will never ever wash my feet!" Jesus replied, "Unless I wash you, you won't belong to me."

9 Simon Peter exclaimed, "Then wash my hands and head as well, Lord, not just my feet!"

10 Jesus replied, "A person who has bathed all over does not need to wash, except for the feet, to be entirely clean."

12 After washing their feet, he put on his robe again and sat down and asked, "Do you understand what I was doing?"

13 "You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and you are right, because that's what I am.

14 "And since I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash each other's feet."

Jesus Teaches Us the Ultimate Lesson in Leadership

Written by:

Ben Houchen

Servant leadership is a leadership philosophy that prioritizes the needs of others and aims to serve

them to help them reach their fullest potential. It is a leadership style that emphasizes humility, empathy, and a commitment to service. One of the most compelling examples of

servant leadership is found in the biblical account of Jesus washing the feet of His disciples in John 13.

In the Gospel of John, we read that Jesus and His

Jesus Teaches Us the Ultimate Lesson in Leadership (Continued)

disciples gathered together to share a meal before the Passover festival. During the meal, Jesus got up from the table, took off His outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around His waist. He then poured water into a basin and began to wash the feet of His disciples, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around His waist. This was a shocking act of humility, as foot washing was usually done by servants and was considered a lowly task.

It is easy to bypass the fact that Jesus' act of washing his disciples' feet was such a clear example of servant leadership. We talk about this so often. We teach this out of this text with such regularity, that we often now miss how well He demonstrated humility by taking on the role of a servant and performing a menial task that was usually done by what Peter clearly sees as being "lessers."

But Jesus understands the need to dispel this mythic thinking, and so He shows this empathy and compassion for His disciples, even in the depths of their own prejudice by recognizing their needs and serving them, teaching them, in a practical way. He

did not just tell them how to behave as leaders, but He showed them how to serve others, and that to do so is what leadership in this new kingdom will be.

Moreover, Jesus' act of washing his disciples' feet was a deep act of love. He was willing to do something uncomfortable and unpleasant for the sake of His disciples. Jesus' love for His disciples was not just a sentimental feeling but was demonstrated through His actions. His act of washing their feet was a tangible expression of His love for them and a palpable example to them of how they will need to lead when He is gone.

As Jesus is not known to miss an opportunity to encourage His followers, He follows up this act of foot washing by reminding them of exactly what this lesson is that He is giving them. And so after he had finished washing their feet, Jesus said to his disciples, "I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you" (John 13:15). Jesus' act of washing His disciples' feet was not just an isolated incident, but was intended to be an example for them to follow--one that would

foreshadow a much greater sacrificial lesson they were all about to learn.

That final thing we need to notice here is that Jesus is further dismantling the religious and social hierarchies prevalent in so many of our cultures and faiths. Jesus is, in one simple act, telling the disciples that He is not better than they are, and that they will not be better than anyone they teach, or lead, or love.

This old mindset clearly takes monumental effort to change, and much of Christian history has ignored this aspect of Jesus' teachings. But the example that He gives us here--of leading from behind, leading as service, not as power--is clear. If we do not dismantle our own inner egos and superiorities, we will never understand what it is to follow; we will never understand what it is to lead in that kingdom.



Ben Houchen is a husband and father of four. He is the Administrator at St. Michael's Episcopal Church in Hays.

Scripture: Mark 14:32-41 (New Living Translation):

Jesus Prays in the Garden of Gethsemane

32 *They went to the olive grove called Gethsemane, and Jesus said, "Sit here while I go and pray."*

33 *He took Peter, James, and John with him, and he became deeply troubled and distressed.*

34 *He told them, "My soul is crushed with grief to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me."*

35 *He went on a little farther and fell to the ground. He prayed that, if it were possible, the awful hour awaiting him might pass him by.*

36 *"Abba, Father," he cried out, "everything is possible for you. Please take this cup of suffering away from me. Yet I want your will to be done, not mine."*

37 *Then he returned and found the disciples asleep. He said to Peter, "Simon, are you asleep? Couldn't you watch with me even one hour?"*

38 *"Keep watch and pray, so that you will not give in to temptation. For the spirit is willing, but the body is weak."*

39 *Then Jesus left them again and prayed the same prayer as before.*

40 *When he returned to them again, he found them sleeping, for they couldn't keep their eyes open. And they didn't know what to say.*

41 *When he returned to them the third time, he said, "Go ahead and sleep. Have your rest. But no—the time has come. The Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners."*

In Gethsemane, Jesus Teaches Us How We Should Pray

Written by:

Steve Urban

Prayer is difficult enough when things are going well in our lives, but when there are obstacles that we face, it is even more challenging. It is especially rough if there is a major decision pending in our life or a situation that could cause pain and lead us to lose our desire for control.

It is in these moments when words are difficult to come by, and even our attention is hard to focus to ensure that true prayer happens. I believe that

Jesus' enduring great anxiety and distress in the Garden of Gethsemane is an example for how we are to pray. His prayer is one of total submission to God without seeing the end in sight. It is utter surrender.

Father Ron Rolheiser in his March 13, 2013, article "Praying In a Crisis" describes Jesus' prayer in the garden as one of complete honesty and helplessness. If God the Father is to bring about His plan in Jesus, the Father must provide the strength necessary to see it to completion. Rolheiser says

Jesus opens himself to God's will in the midst of powerlessness, and His prayer is one of transformation.

In my own life, my prayer isn't always one of conversion, but many times it takes on an antiseptic Band-Aid approach. It is very clean and neat, and what I wish is that God would place a Band-Aid on the problems of my life instead of touching the real wounds of my heart. I put forth my best foot and show God what I want Him to see. However, God sees through the fluff and stuff to

Jesus Teaches Us How We Should Pray (Continued)

uncover the real messiness of my life. God desires to heal the real wounds of my heart and help me come face to face with my true self. That's why Jesus' prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane is the purest form of prayer, and I must imitate it.

It strips away all the stuff and brings me face to face with the living God. As we approach our daily lives, we need to open our hearts to the true prayer stance that God wishes. It is the prayer of surrender of our wants and egos. It is the prayer that His will be done in every moment and every situation of our lives.

In closing, a story from my life helps bring this into focus. When I was discerning whether God

wanted me to be a deacon in the Catholic Church, my spiritual director took me through an Ignatian form of discernment.

The process consisted of writing the pros and cons of why I should become a deacon and the pros and cons why I should not. As I prayed through each reason, a number was assigned from 1 to 5, with 1 being the lowest value and 5 the highest. Then I added up the numbers and whichever decision had the greater numerical value, that might be the path the Holy Spirit was leading me to follow.

However, when I added up the numbers, they came out equal. I remember being bewildered as to what God wanted me to do. In a

panic, I called my spiritual director for guidance, and he said the heart knows best, so follow your heart.

Jesus, in His agony in the garden, prayed earnestly from the heart and surrendered Himself to God's plan. When we are bewildered and facing difficult moments in our lives, we might find our heart space and offer a prayer of submission. And while it might not feel like prayer, it will be the greatest gift we can offer God... an obedient heart.



Steve Urban is a Deacon at St. Nicholas of Myra Catholic Church in Hays.

Scripture: Luke 23:32-33; 39-43 (New Living Translation):

The Criminal on the Cross

32 *Two others, both criminals, were led out to be executed with him (Jesus).*

33 *When they came to a place called The Skull, they nailed him to the cross. And the criminals were also crucified—one on his right and one on his left.*

39 *One of the criminals hanging beside him scoffed, "So you're the Messiah, are you? Prove it by saving yourself—and us, too, while you're at it!"*

40 *But the other criminal protested, "Don't you fear God even when you have been sentenced to die?"*

41 *"We deserve to die for our crimes, but this man hasn't done anything wrong."*

42 *Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your Kingdom."*

43 *And Jesus replied, "I assure you, today you will be with me in paradise."*

At the Cross We See Tragedy and Beauty

Written by:

Rev. Sabian Chaney

The scene in Luke 23:32-33 and 39-43 lays out like a tragedy. There is the perfect Jesus, who has never sinned, nailed to a cross, dying between two criminals. All three men would die a horrible death--two of them as a result of their crimes, one as a result of the crimes of all humanity and the love and glory of God. Two guilty; one innocent--all seemingly bearing the same fate.

Matthew 27:38-44 fills in some of the details concerning these criminals. They were both thieves, and they were both insulting Jesus. How many times have our words, thoughts and actions been an insult to Jesus? How many times, knowingly and unknowingly, have we mocked this loving Messiah?

One of these criminals would persist in his pride and pain to mock Jesus. The irony of his mocking was poignant. He was essentially cruelly asking Jesus to save him, the very act the cross was accomplishing. Had Jesus come off the cross in that moment to save the man physically, Jesus would have abandoned the Father's plan to save all of humanity.

Yet, in the midst of this tragedy, the beauty of God's mercy and grace breaks through. Somewhere in the middle of all this pain, and hurt, and tragedy, the Holy Spirit moved on the other criminal's heart. Somewhere in the look of Jesus, in the response of Jesus, in the sacredness of this moment, the Spirit illuminated the heart of this other man.

We see the transformation of this man's heart from Matthew's and Luke's accounts. No longer mocking Jesus, he comes to the awareness that he deserves death. Somewhere in our journey of faith, we have to come to the realization of the truth that makes Jesus' love so radical. Because of our sins, we all [even the best of us] deserve damnation and death. It's easy to love the loveable. Jesus loves all of us no matter our baggage. He loved even the criminals who were mocking Him to His face as He was bearing the weight of the whole world's sins.

Then, in his limited way, this criminal recognizes who Jesus is, that He's done nothing wrong and that Jesus can save him: "Jesus, remember me when you come into your Kingdom."

This criminal, now saint and child of God, probably didn't have a well thought out idea of the Trinity. He wasn't a member of a church, wasn't water baptized and hadn't taken Communion. While all of those things are good and beneficial, what saved him was his humility, his recognition of his own sin, his faith in Jesus to save him and, ultimately, the saving work of Jesus in His own life, death and resurrection.

Should the Lord tarry, we will all die a physical death. All of us, including myself, are criminals on a cross, and we have a choice to either mock the Savior or turn to Him in faith. In love and with no condemnation, I plead with you --be the second criminal, follow his example in faith.

In the midst of this tragedy is beauty. Oh, that in our last moments on this earth we would hear Jesus say, "Today you will be with me in paradise."



The Rev. Sabian Chaney is the pastor of New Life Center in Hays.

Scripture: John 20:1; 12-18 (New Living Translation):

The Resurrection of Jesus

1 Early on Sunday morning, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and found that the stone had been rolled away from the entrance.

12 She saw two white-robed angels, one sitting at the head and the other at the foot of the place where the body of Jesus had been lying.

13 "Dear woman, why are you crying?" the angels asked her. "Because they have taken away my Lord," she replied, "and I don't know where they have put him."

14 She turned to leave and saw someone standing there. It was Jesus, but she didn't recognize him.

15 "Dear woman, why are you crying?" Jesus asked her. "Who are you looking for?" She thought he was the gardener. "Sir," she said, "if you have taken him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will go and get him."

16 "Mary!" Jesus said. She turned to him and cried out, "Rabboni!" (which is Hebrew for "Teacher").

17 "Don't cling to me," Jesus said, "for I haven't yet ascended to the Father. But go find my brothers and tell them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'"

18 Mary Magdalene found the disciples and told them, "I have seen the Lord!" Then she gave them his message.

Mary Magdalene's Darkness Is Pierced by Jesus' Light

Written by:

Cheryl Glassman

When reading the part of the Easter story I was to reflect upon, I was drawn to the statement about Mary Magdalene walking in the darkness.

A little over 20 years ago, our family made the decision to move to the country. We acquired 35 acres of land and several months later were excited to move into the new home we had erected.

Initially I stayed "close to

home," but eventually I started to wander out into the acreage. After the death of my best friend, my husband Rick cut walking paths for me in the pasture. I distinctly remember the first time I dared to walk that area in the dark. It was a moonlit night, and the paths glistened with fresh dew. There was a very slight breeze and the sound of rustling leaves. I sat on a stone bench and watched as the darkness could no longer fight off the rising light of the sun.

I have always been an admirer of Mary Magdalene. Some theologians depict her as a woman who had lived a life of ill repute, her life reborn when Jesus saved her from being stoned for her lifestyle. Others see her as simply one of the women who followed Jesus and his male disciples.

Regardless of how she is depicted, her presence in the life of Jesus is well documented. Mary Magdalene is mentioned by name 12 times in the

Mary Magdalene's Darkness Is Pierced (Continued)

Gospels. I personally believe that, because Jesus lifted her out of a life of darkness, she was a sort of confidant for Jesus. I imagine Mary and Jesus talking into the wee hours of the night, Jesus explaining the events and ideals of His ministry. I can see Mary nodding, smiling, and listening. When I think of all the intense moments Jesus faced, I imagine in my heart that He was happy to be able to share His joys and frustrations with Mary.

In my own life, if something is frustrating me or I have great news, just talking about it with a trusted friend gives me a newness of spirit. Mary Magdalene trusted, loved, and believed in Jesus wholly and without reservation, and Jesus, in turn, trusted her. This is why I believe Mary Magdalene was the first to see the resurrected Jesus.

So then, we see Mary Magdalene the night before Easter, filled with grief, still

knowing Jesus had told her and His followers that He would rise. But, can someone truly rise from the dead? Mary's heart is racing and filled with questions; yet she knows, even though there might be soldiers or others to stop her, she must go to Jesus' tomb, the tomb of her friend, her savior.

She is walking in the darkness. Can you see her? The early morning air is cool, crisp, and maybe a slight breeze is wafting the scent of the oils she is carrying. Her sandals slip and slide from time to time on the rocky ground, and she holds tight to the jars and cloths. Through the darkness she peers ahead. When she sees the open tomb, I cannot even imagine her bewilderment. Not only is the tomb open, but Jesus is gone. When she sees the angels, she does not flee. I believe Mary's faith in Jesus and her strength of spirit lifts her voice to ask where her beloved Jesus might be. I cannot imagine how her

heart leapt when Jesus said her name. Mary did as Jesus asked and took the message of His resurrection to the disciples. Her heart was no longer filled with darkness, but with the light of the risen Lord.

In the Catholic Church we do not sing or say the word "Alleluia" during Lent. We "fast" from saying this special word of praise during what could be construed as our own period of darkness. When Easter arrives, we joyously proclaim, "Alleluia! He is risen!"

May this Easter fill our hearts and lives with light and joy, the same light and joy known by Mary Magdalene. And, like Mary, may we jubilantly share the resurrection of Christ our Lord. Alleluia! He is risen!



Cheryl Glassman is the Director of Music at St. Nicholas of Myra Catholic Church in Hays.