

**Easter Sunday Homily**  
**April 5th, 2015**

On Good Friday, we left this place in silence and darkness. Today, the Gospel of Luke also begins the Easter story in darkness. Luke says, "At early dawn, the women went to the tomb." Every one of us knows those moments of darkness

- Earlier this week, a woman was called into her supervisor's office to hear that times were hard for the company and they had to let her go.
- Earlier this week, in a doctor's office, someone learned that their cancer had returned.
- Earlier this week, a man heard the words "I don't love you anymore. I want a divorce."
- Earlier this week, parents were disappointed by children.
- Earlier this week, someone else's dreams were ripped away.
- Earlier this week, someone's hope was crucified. And the resulting darkness is overwhelming.

As Craig Barnes says, "No one is ever ready to encounter Easter until she or he has spent time in the dark place where

hope cannot be seen. Easter is the last thing we are expecting. And that is why it terrifies us. It's about more hope than we can handle."

It's hard to know what Mary was thinking when she headed down the road that day, toward the tomb. When she arrived at the tomb, things were not in order. She had expected the tomb to be closed as any proper tomb should be. Instead, it was open...the tomb was empty.

Of course, the disciples had to run to the tomb to check things out. Then the nameless disciple said, "The tomb is empty, he must be gone." And then, having proved to themselves that the tomb was indeed empty, they headed home.

Of course, that wasn't good enough for Mary. It would have been easy for her to leave with the men. But she couldn't leave...this was all so **awful**. And so, in the midst of her weeping and her hopelessness she found herself bending down to see the black emptiness of the tomb again. Maybe the sad truth would sink in with just one more look.

Of course, she was in for a shock. The tomb wasn't empty at all – two angels in white were sitting where Jesus' body should have been.

She turned away from these men in white only to find another standing before her. Unlike the angels, he was dressed in simple clothes – “a gardener,” she thought.

“Mary”, the man said. It was Jesus...alive. In that moment, Mary's hope came back to life. Her expectations were rekindled. She was in the presence of the risen Christ.

And to think, if she had gone home (like the men), if she hadn't hung around, if she hadn't been willing to take another look and stare at the gaping hole of death in the face, she would have missed him. It took a second look, a second glance in the midst of her pain, to hear Jesus call out her name and see his face come into view.

Why then do we bother when hope seems gone? We bother because we believe in a God of second looks, a God of second chances. We bother because we know that there is so much more

to the story that we can't head home until we've seen Jesus face to face.

What is more important is that we stand in the garden and hear him say our name. For when we meet him, hear him, and see him, we find our tears turning to laughter, our sorrows turned to dancing, and our despair transformed into hope.

Back in the 1980's, Ted Koppel asked Archbishop Desmond Tutu if the situation in South Africa, with its system of racial segregation called "apartheid", was hopeless. "Of course it's hopeless from a human point of view," Tutu replied. "But we believe in the resurrection, and so we are prisoners of hope."

We too are prisoners of hope, taken captive by the risen savior and filled with the knowledge that nothing is impossible with God.

Some of us today find ourselves in the pit of despair. We feel like our hope is gone. We've looked in the tomb and it's empty. We don't know where Jesus is gone and we're not really sure where to go to find him.

Take another look. Look into our pain and despair and we will discover the risen Christ standing in our midst, offering love and comfort.

There are others of us for whom things are going pretty well. We've taken a look at Jesus, maybe even looked in the tomb. But we headed home without really understanding what was going on.

Take another look. All of us...no matter where we sit or stand today. We need to cast aside our complacency, our fear, and most of all, our smug notions that we fully know everything about Jesus. Take another look, and let us be prepared to discover more.

Take another look and encounter anew the one who healed the sick, who fed the hungry, and the one that raises all of us to new life.

Christ has risen. Christ has risen indeed!