

# Sr. Margaret Dorgan's Weekly

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## ALLELUIA IS OUR SONG

The most important chapter of human history, begun when Christ was conceived in Mary's womb, culminates in the Resurrection. One who was crucified as a criminal with two malefactors by His side, comes forth in a glorified body to astonish His disciples and all who heard of this wonder. The followers of Jesus had been crushed by the events of Calvary. In John's Gospel, we see Mary Magdalene going early the next Sunday morning to the site of the tomb. She thought nothing of the danger to a woman moving alone in the dark to a isolated area that harbored the dead. She sees the stone rolled away and runs with even greater anguish to Peter and John. She reports that the tomb is empty. The two apostles leave in haste and find linen cloths lying and the napkin that had been on Christ's head. Where is the dead body of Jesus? Who has removed it?

Later, Peter would describe what had occurred, "God freed Christ from death's bitter pangs and raised Him up again, for it was impossible that death should keep its hold on him" (Acts 2:24). Jesus appears many times to His followers in the brief period before His Ascension. He usually comes to those who are weighed down by grief, overcome by disappointment or filled with fear. Words are spoken, "Peace be with you." (Jn 20:21). Jesus is not recognized until He speaks. Mary Magdalene thought he was the gardener.

No one actually saw the Resurrection take place. We move from the body of Jesus taken down from the Cross to His manifestation in a new glorious form. This is not as it was with Lazarus, the resuscitation of a corpse. The very physicality of Jesus flesh has undergone a transformation. It is no longer subject to the laws of our material nature. He foreshadows the attributes our bodies will have at our own future resurrection. The first quality is impassibility: pain will have no dominion over us. Next, glory will make us shine like the sun with differing degrees of brightness. The third quality is agility, whereby the body moves with a swiftness wherever the soul wishes to go. The last characteristic is called subtlety which means the body is wholly subject to the spirit. We see this in Christ's ability to pass through material barriers, suddenly appearing to His followers.

The passion and death of Jesus Christ atoned for our sins. However, the fullness of our redemption is accomplished through His resurrection. "If Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless and you are still in your sins...But in fact, Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep" (I Cor 15:17,20).

If Christ had simply died on the cross in our behalf, we would be filled with gratitude and amazement that He would love us so greatly. We would weep as Mary Magdalene did and our tears would never stop falling. The suffering of Jesus lasts for a terrible stretch of agony that begins with His scourging and ends when He cries

out, "Father, into Your hands, I commend my Spirit" (Lk 23:46). Then all is silent until His first appearances and the question of the angels, "Why do you search for the living one among the dead?" (Lk 24:5). Our Redeemer went through the passage of death for us, and for our sake rose from the dead.

We understand pain, the wounds in His sacred hands, the thrust of a spear in His side. But His rising from the dead: How did it come about? We can answer that the power of the Father made it happen, and His own power. Yet we still have no way of comprehending how that was brought to pass. We see Jesus with the disciples at Emmaus. They do not recognize Him and mourn that all their expectations ended in disaster. "We had hoped...." (Lk 24:21 Even new accounts about the disappearance of His body and the sightings of angels do not restore their confidence. Jesus unlocks the passages of Scripture referring to Himself, and later they know Him in the breaking of the bread.

"We had hoped." The Easter narratives describe events without unraveling the mystery underlying them. Now we are offspring brought forth in Easter glory. "Praised be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who in His great mercy gave us new birth." What is this new life begotten in us? "A birth unto hope which draws its life from the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1 Pt 1:3). The Emmaus disciples' "We had hoped" has turned into what they could never have envisaged: a hope "leading to an imperishable inheritance, incapable of fading...which is kept in heaven" (4).

Easter is the feast of hope, telling us that whatever pain we may have to endure in this earthly life will pass away and gain for us an eternal recompense. "There is cause for rejoicing. You may for a time have to suffer the distress of many trials. But this is so that your faith, more precious than the passing splendor of fire-tried gold, may lead to praise, glory, and honor when Jesus Christ appears" (1 Pt 1:6,7). The Man of Sorrows now leads us out of sorrow, as He Himself left the suffering of Golgotha, to show us the light that shines and never fades. We look at our world on a global scale and see widespread human misery. Close at hand, our own losses and those of others call for a Saviour. In Him we understand "the present burden is earning for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison. We do not fix our eyes on what is seen but what is unseen and lasts forever" (2 Cor 4:17,18).

Human life, once touched by the rays of the Resurrection, moves to a canticle of praise that has to sing its song to others. "For the promise is to you and to your children and to all those still far off whom the Lord our God calls" (Acts 2:28). Jesus counts on us to spread the word, helping others to know Him in the Paschal mystery. "For God who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' has shone in our hearts, that we in turn might make known the glory of God shining on the face of Christ" (2 Cor 4:6). A joyous **Alleluia** is our refrain. Come, join us, we say. Brothers and sisters, we long to have *your Alleluia* sound in our ears.

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Alleluia!