

Easter Sunday

April 4, 2021

In today's gospel everyone is running! Mary Magdalene discovers that Jesus' tomb is open and empty – and she quickly runs to tell the other disciples. When they hear her disturbing report, Simon Peter and the beloved disciple run to the tomb to find out what has happened. The beloved disciple is faster and gets there first. Behind him, Peter – older, perhaps heavier, probably out of shape – lumbers along with greater effort.

But when they get to the tomb, they slow down. They stop. They hesitate. Like all of us, they are a bit cautious in the face of the unknown. They waver somewhat as they approach the empty tomb.

The beloved disciple peers inside and sees only the body wrappings lying on the ground. Peter enters the tomb and sees the wrappings and the cloth that covered Jesus' head. Peter is puzzled. What does it mean? Then the beloved disciple enters and, although the evidence does not of itself compel belief, he believes! Loving Jesus increases and deepens our faith. Even so, the gospel reminds us that “they did not yet understand the Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.”

On every Easter morning, God leads us, step by step, deeper into the mystery of life and death, resurrection and love. Like the beloved disciple, we who gather here this morning nearly two millennia later, also see the empty tomb and believe that Jesus has risen. What else would have brought us here this morning?

Faith is a complex process, a combination of insight, experience, memories, joys, sorrows, pains, doubts, clarity, surprises, sudden flashes of certitude, long periods of searching and questioning – all gifts from God. Each of us is different. Each of us has his or her own story of the journey to the tomb and the discovery of the risen Lord in our lives. We gather today to celebrate that journey, that discovery, that faith, and the Lord who awaits us beyond the tomb.

We stand before the empty tomb this morning. We are surrounded – always and everywhere – by the mysterious and awesome grace and love of God. We are not alone. We do not stand or run alone. We need not carry out our responsibilities alone. The risen Lord, our brother Jesus, accompanies us on every step of our pilgrimage of faith and life. The Lord has risen! Alleluia!