

St Joseph's Catholic Parish

Fourth Sunday of Easter
Year B, 21 April, 2024

Embracing the communities of
Cherbourg, Goomeri, Murgon,
Proston and Wondai



Unity in Diversity ... being one in Christ through Baptism!



Who was the first one to see the Risen Christ?

Our Lady of the Resurrection

The Risen Christ stands in our midst. He has conquered the kingdom of sin and death. The Resurrection of the Lord stops the momentum of evil and leads us to glory unto glory.

The accounts given in the Gospel books of the Risen Christ's encounters with others are sources of great consolation and encouragement, but also of intense inquiry and unrest.

To whom did the Lord appear?

How can such encounters help us to experience the Resurrection in our own lives and be more faithful disciples of the Lord Jesus?

Starting Easter Day, the liturgical season of Easter spans 50 days. These 50 days include the 40 days in which the Lord Jesus revealed himself, walked with his apostles and disciples, unveiled the power of the Paschal mystery, and retaught them the truths of his Gospel.

The work of the Easter season is the same now as it was more than 2,000 years ago, namely, to reflect on what has just happened and to process what it all means.

God has literally been tortured and murdered and then gloriously raised on the third day for us. The Paschal mystery is as much 'paschal' as it is 'mystery', and we need to give ourselves the time to explore this mystery.

The early Church announced, "The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!" It's a joyful declaration, and yet such an appearance is not recorded

in the written Gospel books. Up to this point in the Gospels, there is no documented encounter between the Risen Christ and his chief apostle. When and where did the Lord appear to Simon Peter? We don't know, and even our tradition is quiet on the subject.

The awareness of such an appearance raises a guiding question: **Who was the first to see the Risen Christ?**

Was it Saint John the Beloved? He loved the Lord, and he ran to the tomb when he heard it was empty.

"Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first".

Saint John paused and deferred to Saint Peter, the chief apostle, who had fallen behind him in the race to the tomb. Saint John looked inside but did not walk into the tomb: "He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in".

And so, it was not Saint John who was the first to see the Risen Christ. Was it Simon Peter, then, who first saw him? He also ran to the tomb; and when Saint John paused, Saint Peter entered the tomb without hesitation: "Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb".

The Risen Lord was not in the tomb. It was only an empty tomb, and there was no appearance of Jesus Christ. And so, it was not Saint Peter who was the first to see the Lord.

Upon reading the sacred narrative, we see that it was Mary Magdalene who told Saint Peter and Saint John about the empty tomb, which led them to run to the tomb in order to see for themselves: "Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, 'They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him!'"

After Saint Peter and Saint John returned to their homes after seeing the empty tomb, the Risen Christ appeared to and spoke to Mary Magdalene. In speaking to her, the Lord offered Mary Magdalene his consolation and peace and sent her to tell his apostles that he is risen:

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Sunday Mass Times

Murgon

| WEEK | DAY | TIME |
|-------|--------|--------|
| every | Sunday | 8.00am |

Wondai

| WEEK | DAY | TIME |
|-------|----------|--------|
| every | Saturday | 5.00pm |

Proston

| | | |
|-------|----------|--------|
| every | Saturday | 9.00am |
|-------|----------|--------|

Goomeri

| WEEK | DAY | TIME |
|-------|-------------------------------|--------|
| every | Sunday (except 5th Sunday) | 6.00pm |

Gayndah

| WEEK | DAY | TIME |
|-------|---------------|---------|
| every | 1st, 3rd, 5th | 10.30am |
| every | 2nd, 4th | 9.00am |

Cherbourg

| WEEK | DAY | TIME |
|------|--------|--------|
| 5 | Sunday | 4.30pm |

Weekday Mass Times

12 noon, Wednesday, Gayndah

5.00pm, Wednesday, Wondai

**Change to 8.00am, Thursday
25 April, for ANZAC Mass, Murgon**

9.00am, Friday, Castra

Holy Hour for Peace

**Wondai, 4.00pm to 5.00pm,
Wednesday, before Mass**

Today's readings

Acts 4: 8-12; Saint John 3: 1-2;
John 10: 11-18

Response:

The stone rejected by the builders
has become the cornerstone.

Gospel Acclamation:

Alleluia, alleluia! I am the good
shepherd, says the Lord; I know my
sheep, and mine know me. Alleluia!

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"Jesus said to her, 'Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.' Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, 'I have seen the Lord'; and she told them that he had said these things to her.'"

Since the Lord Jesus entrusted her with this announcement to the apostles, Mary Magdalene is called the 'Apostle to the Apostles'. Thus, according to this Gospel passage, it's clear that the Risen Christ appeared to Saint Mary Magdalene.

Except, we know that the biblical narrative does not contain all of the accounts of the appearances of the Risen Christ. For example, as mentioned above, we don't have a biblical account of the Lord's appearance to Saint Peter. As a further example, the Gospel books also do not tell us about the appearance of the Lord Jesus to the 500 disciples.

We only know of this appearance because of a very passing reference to it by Saint Paul:

"For I handed on to you as of first importance what I in turn had received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the Twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers and sisters at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have died. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me".

In this passing reference, we're also told about a Resurrection appearance to Saint James the Less. He was one of the apostles, a kinsman of the Lord, and later served as the first bishop of Jerusalem. And yet, if it wasn't for this very quick reference by Saint Paul, we would never have known of the Lord's appearance to Saint James the Less, and we have no details on what this appearance involved.

In addition to the selective nature of the appearances of the Risen Christ in the sacred Scriptures, we have to remember that the testimony of the Resurrection is found also in sacred Tradition.

As Catholic Christians, who hold the fullness of the Christian faith, we do not rely solely on the written word of God in the Bible, but also on the oral word of God passed down from sacred Tradition. It's worth reminding ourselves that it was sacred Tradition that gave us the Bible, and it is Tradition that still serves as the Bible's context and its arena for authentic interpretation.

And so, broadening our perspective and relying on both the sacred Scriptures and sacred Tradition, we can ask again:

Who was the first one to see the Risen Christ?

If we look at Saint Mary Magdalene and the other holy women who went to anoint the dead body of our Lord, we can begin to discern an answer.

Who was at Calvary but was oddly missing from among the holy women who went to the tomb? Who was entrusted to the apostle Saint John and brought into his home but did not accompany him to the tomb when he ran there?

These questions point us to echo the assertion of some of the Church's saints: The first person to see the Risen Christ was his mother, Our Lady, Mary of Nazareth.

How right and just it is that such a loving Son would first appear to his mother, whose own heart suffered with his, whose own soul was crushed with his own.

Our Lady saw the mockery, the rejection, the derision, the scorn, the jeering, the beatings, the lashes, the pummeling, the punches, the nails, the forsaking and the horrible crucifixion that made her Son – True God and True Man – cry out in excruciating pain and ultimately surrender his spirit, dying on a cross.

Our Lady saw it all. She was the *stabat mater* (the "standing mother") — the perfection of love, a love that does not know cowardice or comfortability. Yes, Our Lady was there. She witnessed it all. She suffered it all with her Son. As prophesied on the Lord's presentation when he was a tender 40 days old, a spiritual sword would pierce Our Lady's own heart:

"Then Simeon blessed them and said to his mother Mary, 'This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed – and a sword will pierce your own soul too!'"

When the Lord gloriously rose from the dead, nothing could have stopped him, nothing could have hindered him from flying to his mother and appearing to her. We can spiritually imagine the Lord saying to his mother:

"Mother, I am risen! Death has been conquered. Mom, I'm okay. Everything is all right. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. All things are new in me. Now, let the new creation begin!"

Our Lady deserved to see the Risen Christ first, to see his body healed and his spirit restored, to see his smile and witness his glory.

Yes, Our Lady was the first to see the Risen Christ. That is why she didn't go to the tomb with the holy women to anoint his body. She didn't need to:



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We pray for those who are sick:

Renee Elliott; Michael Bond;
Orlando Dyrit; Wendy Heidemann;
Allan McKeering; David McIntosh;
Bob Ricketts.

Our Lady knew her Son was risen. This is why she didn't run with Saint John to the tomb to see. Our Lady had already seen and knew that the Christ was risen. This is also why we don't hear about Our Lady in this interval in the Bible. In fact, we will not hear about her again until Pentecost, when she is given the Holy Spirit for her vocation as Mother of the Church.

Our Lady saw the Risen Christ. She is – and will always be – Our Lady of the Resurrection

Fr Jeffrey Kirby NRC



BAKED GOODS STALL

27 April, 2024 at Boondooma Homestead at the 'Spirit of the Bush'. Donations of goods are welcomed. If you can help please contact Convenor, Fay Kruger on 4168 0147 or Elaine Thompson on 0419 693 602. Monies raised will go to our Parish.

Change to weekday Mass times as from May 2024

1st and 3rd Thursdays, 9.00am at Castra; and 2nd and 4th Thursdays, 9.00am School/Parish Mass Murgon