

## Easter Day Year B 2009

**Alleluia. Christ is risen. The Lord is risen indeed, Alleluia.**  
**Christos anesti; Alleluia. Alleluia. Alethws Anesti. AMEN.**

The beginning of John's resurrection day account is packed with details to ground the narrative in reality. It was the first day of the week and it was still dark. Mary Magdalene was there. She went to the two authoritative disciples, Simon Peter, and the beloved disciple. She reported to them that the tomb was open, empty, and she said they'd taken the Lord. Peter and the other disciple raced to the tomb, and the other disciple beat Peter there. They found Jesus' grave clothes, not together, but the head wrapping at a distance from the others. Then the two men went home. Mary stayed and wept. There were the two angels sitting where Jesus had been who asked why she was weeping. When she was further in to the tomb, Jesus, whom she didn't recognize, also asked her why she was weeping. Both times she answered that someone had taken the body of Jesus and she didn't know where it was. Both the angels and Jesus addressed her as "Woman," presumably calling her by title, as an adult woman unknown to them. When Jesus realized her distress included not recognizing him, he addressed her by name. Only someone who knew her well would have both known her name and called her by name in public. Jesus addresses her as "Mary," Immediately, she understood who the person addressing her had to be. She might have asked why there were angels there, or who they were, or asked why she didn't recognize Jesus, or why he wasn't recognizable to her, but instead she demonstrates her relief by simply calling him by what she must have addressed him as, "Rabbi." She would have called him by title, using that title rather than the more personal, even intimate, use of his name. She was immediately certain who he was, relieved, and apparently reached out to touch him. Jesus drew back, because for some reason he wasn't in condition to be touched. Mary might have questioned why that was so, who the others with Jesus were and why and how he was there in person. She didn't ask any of those questions we would so much like to have had

answered. She was happy, relieved, overjoyed, and absolutely positive of what or whom she was seeing. She went to the others and not just “said” or even “reported,” but “announced, I have seen the Lord” and told what he had said to her.

However odd the various circumstances of her visit to the tomb, none of those made the kind of impact on her that seeing, recognizing, knowing it was Jesus made on her. She didn’t announce, “I have heard,” or “I have spoken:” to the Lord, or to Jesus. She did conclude if she had seen Jesus, now risen from the dead, if she had seen her dear Rabbi alive and talking, he must be “the Lord.” She shifts from reporting to making a conclusion for us for all time. She was absolutely positive that the unfamiliar presence who addressed her by her own name had to be her Rabbi, because only Jesus would have known her by name, and if he was Jesus, then he had indeed, in truth, to be risen from the dead and must be, had to be, known and understood as the Lord.

We weren’t there, and so it’s harder for us to be quite as positive. There are other accounts, which agree with this one in the central account, but we are used to being able to test out, verify, prove, and know by ourselves and for ourselves every detail of what we are to hold as knowable and known.

Wendell Berry, poet, novelist, and essayist writes as follows.

“So, friends, every day do something  
that won’t compute. Love the Lord.  
Love the world. Work for nothing.  
Take all that you have and be poor.  
Love someone who does not deserve it.

...

Ask the questions that have no answers.  
Invest in the millennium. Plant sequoias.  
Say that your main crop is the forest  
That you did not plant,  
That you will not live to harvest.

Expect the end of the world. Laugh.  
Laughter is immeasurable. Be joyful

Though you have considered all the facts.

As soon as the generals and the politicians  
 Can predict the motions of your mind,  
 Lose it. Leave it as a sign  
 To mark the false trail, the way  
 You didn't go. Be like the fox  
 who makes more tracks than necessary,  
 some in the wrong direction.

Practice resurrection. (Excerpted from *Manifesto: The Mad Farmer Liberation Frost* from *Country of Marriage* © 1973.

Mary Magdalene knew it was the Lord. This resurrection account uses many details to make it read like history, as fact, but there remains the question for everyone who only hears or reads this narrative, is it true? She asserts that what she experienced was truth. The earlier, first line of Christians, the orthodox, say, "Alleluia. Christ is risen. In truth He is risen," while we in an emergent strain of Christianity say, "Alleluia, Christ is risen, in deed, in fact, He is risen." We want all the facts, but we still poke and poke at them, testing them for validity. We do long to say with Mary Magdalene, "I have seen the Lord," so "Practice resurrection."

James Carroll's newest book is called *Practicing Catholic*, and part of his theme is that religion is something to be practiced. We used to call it the practice of our faith, and as we've less often called what we do here together, practicing, we've also done it less. It takes practice. To be a pianist, takes practice; to be a believer, it takes practice. Mary Magdalene having practiced listening to Jesus knew it was he when he was there in front of her, unrecognizable and risen from the dead. She knew; she recognized him, she drew her own conclusion, and with her factual and experiential practice said, "I have seen the Lord." She was sure, and when we pay attention to her, we do practice resurrection. "Ask the questions that have no answers," but practice resurrection:" Alleluia Christ is risen. In truth, he is risen; in deed, he is risen. Alleluia. Good News.

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