

Homily  
3 EasterA.4.30.17  
St. Bernard Church  
Deacon Tim Sullivan

Since Easter Sunday, our gospel readings have naturally focused on what the Bible tells us happened after the Resurrection of Jesus.

But today, I want to focus on what happened after Jesus rose from the dead that is not in the Bible.

Now don't worry. I'm going to quote from reliable sources.

Let's start with a question. If you knew only that Jesus rose from the dead and spent 40 days making appearances on earth before He ascended into heaven, who is the first person you think Jesus would have appeared to?

How about Mary? Not Mary Magdalene. Mary, the mother of Jesus.

How could Jesus have risen from the dead and not appeared to his own mother? That doesn't make any sense. No Jewish boy would have done that.

Saint Ambrose wrote in the 4th Century that "Mary saw the resurrection of the Lord; she was the first to see and believe. Mary Magdalene also saw, but she hesitated."

In the Section 219 of his Spiritual Exercises, Saint Ignatius of Loyola recommends that we develop a mental picture of Mary's house and imagine the moment at which Mary first sees and embraces her risen Son.

In 1997, Pope Saint John Paul II gave an audience on the theme of "Mary and the Resurrection of Christ." He said that from the omission in the Bible of any meeting between Jesus and Mary after the Resurrection, "{o}ne must not deduce that Christ, after his Resurrection, did not appear to Mary." He asserted that logically, Mary was more than likely the first

person to whom the risen Jesus appeared, which would explain why she was not among the group of women who approached the tomb at dawn and discovered that the body of Jesus was missing.

I'm not bringing this up just for the sake of history. Why is this important? What does it mean to us?

It is often said that Mary is the icon of the Church. Just as Mary gave birth to Jesus, knew him better and loved him more than any other human being, so the Church gives birth to Jesus by revealing Him to the world. Through the Church, we are to learn about Jesus and love Him with all our hearts as Mary did.

So let's think about this. Mary's heart was filled with the greatest, most intense love possible for her son, Jesus. She was there at Calvary, as He carried His cross to His death. She saw Him bleeding. She heard people screaming at Him, mocking Him. She felt the heat. She breathed the dust. Then she was there below the cross when He died, and she saw her Son's body speared with a lance.

So when she goes back to her home, or to the home of a friend in Jerusalem, and she is feeling the greatest sadness any human being will ever know, what was it like when she looked up and saw Jesus, standing before her, very much alive, and looking at her with an even greater love for her than she had for him?

That's why Saint Ambrose, Saint Ignatius Loyola and Pope Saint John Paul II thought it was important to bring this up. They are encouraging all of us to reflect and meditate on this moment, the first encounter between the risen Jesus and His Mother, to give us a deeper sense of the beauty, the power, the richness of His Resurrection for all of us who love Him.

Your reflection on this special moment between Jesus and Mary might lead to other helpful questions to ponder.

During the 40 days after Jesus rose from the dead, was He present to Mary or any of His followers on a Sunday? If so, did He preside over the Eucharist, as He apparently did for the two disciples at Emmaus? Did He give Holy Communion to His mother?

Put yourself in Mary's position. Imagine that you are among the disciples on a Sunday after Jesus has risen from the dead, and He appears to you. Then He begins to pray and to celebrate the Eucharist. He comes to you and stands before you to give you His body and blood. Imagine what that was like for Mary.

Jesus knew that He was going to ascend to the Father, and so that we would have the benefit of this same experience that Mary and the disciples might have experienced, He delegates to men like Msgr. Gaalaas and Fr. Thomas the power to stand in His place, to represent Him in giving us His body and blood.

Imagine all that. Embracing the risen Jesus. Praying with Him. Rejoicing with him. Receiving His body and blood. If you want to know what that was like, ask for Mary's help. Draw closer to her. She will take you there.