

Relax, Enjoy the Ride

When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. They had been saying to one another, 'Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?' Mk 16:1-3

As you can imagine, the two Mary's, along with all of Jesus' followers, were carrying very heavy burdens after their teacher was crucified on Friday. The disciples feared for their lives and were in hiding, so that they would not be found in conspiracy with their executed leader. The two Marys, as women, may have been slightly less concerned about arrest, but were burdened with the tangible reality of the death of their beloved friend and teacher. Who would tell family and friends, and who would support them in their grief? Who would care for Jesus' mangled body, giving Him the dignity of a proper burial? Who would risk all this knowing that Jesus was feared and hated by the authorities who would brutally suppress any uprising of sympathy with this criminal?

"Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest," (Mt 11:28) said Jesus, but then and now, it is awful hard to ignore the burdens and realities which weigh us down in this life, for a hope that is outside of ourselves, not based on our own capacities or capabilities but on God. It's not too hard to see the irony in today's Gospel reading. The two Mary's carried oil and spices to embalm Jesus' body. But they wouldn't need them. They were worried who would roll away the stone for them, but they didn't need to. It's not hard to recognize how these women, in a story where we know the ending, were worried about things they needn't be.

But how is it for us, in the story of our life which we don't yet know the ending? What kinds of heavy things are we carrying this Easter Sunday that we don't need to carry, because Christ is Resurrected from the dead and has shouldered the full burden of our human condition, lifting form off of us, all sin and death itself. Are you burdened by fear of not measuring up to the standard at work or at home? Are you burdened by guilt that you have not done the right thing by loved ones? Are you pinned down by an inability to forgive and forget past injuries you have suffered? Jesus promises "Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest," (Mt 11:28) yet it is so hard for us to let go and let God.

It reminds me of a story of another woman, like the Marys, like us. One day a man was driving his pickup truck on a country road when he saw a woman carrying a heavy load, so he stopped and offered her a lift. The woman expressed her gratitude and climbed into the back of the truck.

A moment later, the man noticed a strange thing: the woman was still holding onto her heavy load despite sitting in the vehicle! Looking on her with sympathy, the man pleaded, "Please, Mam, put down your load and take your rest. My truck can carry you and your stuff. Just relax."

What do we do with the load of fear, guilt, shame and anxiety we often carry as we go through life's many challenges? Instead of relaxing in the Lord, I often behave like that woman. I often find myself, like the Mary's, carrying great anxiety and burdens as I go to serve the Lord, burdens which Jesus promises to carry.

And today on Easter Sunday, Jesus demonstrates to all of us, in every time and place and fear and situation, that the God who raises the dead is more real, more powerful than any heavy reality we encounter. Krisdos Hareav I Merelots-Orhneal Eh Harootyunn Kristosi. Christ is Risen from the Dead, and offers to carry us, his loved ones, with him. Put your load down and take your rest. Trust that Our Lord can carry us from where we are now to a place we never dreamed we might be; now and always and unto the ages of ages; amen.