

Easter Cycle A, April 16

Sometimes, fear is the appropriate response to a situation.

It is no wonder that Mary Magdalene and the other Mary in the gospel are afraid. After all, a cemetery can look like a spooky place, especially at daybreak when it is still dark. Even if you don't believe in ghosts, who knows what you will bump into? There could be grave robbers about. What would two unarmed women do, if they encountered something like that? No wonder they are on edge.

And then, there is the earthquake. An angel flies down and rolls away the boulder blocking the entrance to the tomb of Jesus. When the soldiers guarding the tomb see that, they faint dead away. No wonder that Mary Magdalene and the other Mary are also afraid.

That's why, the very first thing that the angel says to the women is: "Do not be afraid."

That's why, when they meet the Risen Christ a few minutes later, he once again tells them: "Do not be afraid."

Fear was written all over their faces. It was obvious to all who saw them. That is why the angels, and then Jesus, seek to strengthen them, to encourage them.

And what could encourage them more, than hearing the good news that Jesus was risen from the dead? I can think of only one thing, actually seeing Jesus face to face, full of life once again.

In the years ahead, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary would have other reasons to be afraid. According to tradition, they became missionaries, travelling as far as southern France. They would put up with much hardship and face many dangers, in spreading the new faith. They would have many reasons to be afraid. But through it all, the good news that Jesus was risen from the dead would pull them through, would keep them going. It would take away their fear.

That holds true for us as well. The good news of Jesus' resurrection enables us to move beyond our fears. It enables us to follow Jesus Christ, wherever that may take us. It enables us to live up to the promises of our baptism, no matter what people might say about us.

In a few moments, seven young people will be baptized. They will be making a commitment to follow Jesus Christ. In a few moments, the rest of us will also renew our own commitment to follow Jesus Christ, as we reaffirm the promises of our baptism. We are able to make that commitment because Jesus Christ is risen. He is living among us. He wishes to remove all fear from our hearts, so that we might share our faith in him with others.