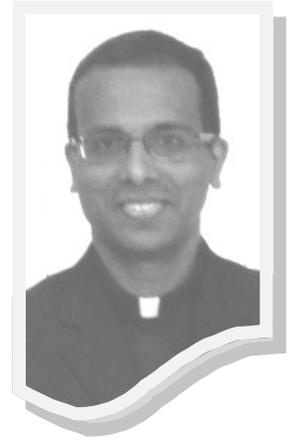




From the Pastor



Resurrection and God's Mercy—Part II

The first person to see the risen Christ was Mary Magdalene. Why did Mary receive that privilege? In Jesus' first appearance to Mary Magdalene, God's story of love and mercy continues. Mary Magdalene is one of the greatest saints of the Bible and a legendary example of God's mercy and grace.

The Gospels agree that Mary was originally a great sinner. Jesus cast seven demons out of her when he met her. She was certainly a sinner whom Jesus saved, giving us an example of how no person is beyond the saving grace of God.

Mary Magdalene was present when Christ rose from the dead. She was the first witness to the resurrection. Mary loved Jesus very much. She was the first to visit the tomb. She would not wait for the Sabbath to pass to visit the tomb of the one she loved to anoint his body. Visiting his tomb, she found the stone rolled away and Christ, very much alive, sitting at the place where they laid him. She was the first to communicate the message that Jesus had risen. She stayed behind in the tomb weeping while the other disciples left. In Mary and in every sinner who repents, Jesus' words, "I tell you there is great joy in heaven when one sinner repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons . . ." (Lk. 15:7) find fulfillment.

God's mercy follows us wherever we go. He does not abandon us to our doubt, confusion, despair, or sorrow. He comes to us with his mercy to strengthen us. The story of Emmaus is a story of God's mercy following us to find us where we are to make us strong.

Two of Jesus' disciples left Jerusalem to go back to their native town filled with sorrow at what had happened to Jesus and deeply confused about the talk of his resurrection. Jesus joins them—as a stranger. He walks with them, explains the scriptures to them, and finally manifests himself at the breaking of bread. At that moment, the disciples' eyes were opened to recognize their Master who had truly risen from the dead, and then they recalled, "Were not our hearts burning within us when he opened the scriptures to us on the way?" This unexpected encounter of the mercy of God turned their doubt into trust, despair into hope, and sorrow into joy. They were so full of joy that they could not hold it to themselves. Therefore, they returned to Jerusalem to share this joyful news with the rest of the disciples.

Here we find a God who does not leave us in despair and sorrow but accompanies us with his mercy, bringing us back to faith, hope, and trust.

"Christ is risen. He is risen indeed!"

—Fr. Jose Thomas