

A new kind of life

My favorite animal beside my own pets is the rabbit – bunnies. I won one at an Easter Egg Hunt when I was about 8. I found the silver egg – the golden egg won a white bunny, mine was brown – the kind you see around here. I named it bunny. Bunnies are connected to Easter because they are famous for having other bunnies, they make a perfect example of life renewing itself, of new life. Bunnies have litters about 10 times a year – each time between 4 and 12 babies. That's a lot of new life. And at Easter time, new life is everywhere. Flowers pushing up through the hard ground; buds coming out on the trees; birds building nests for their eggs. It's amazing to me the way plants seem to disappear in the winter. Looking at a yard, you cannot tell that under the ground flowers are waiting for spring to call them up. You might think it was just deserted, with no life at all.

That's the way things looked to Jesus' disciples in the early hours of Easter morning. They had been through a really bad week. Jesus was arrested. One of Jesus' best friends betrayed him. Then another friend pretended he didn't know him – three times! The Roman Governor, Pilate, said right out – this man has done nothing wrong but every time Pilate wanted to let Jesus go, the crowd shouted, "Crucify him, Crucify him." So the soldiers took Jesus off to be killed – even though he was innocent.

Things looked barren and deserted to his disciples. The man who had taught them and others about God; the man who healed people, defended people, who befriended the poor was gone. They were really sad and scared because they were afraid the soldiers might come for them the way they had for Jesus.

Mary Magdalene was so sad she wasn't even thinking about what might happen to her. She couldn't imagine how her life would go on without Jesus. Things looked beyond barren to her. So, she went to the tomb where they had put Jesus' body, just to be near where she had seen him last. The tomb was a cave and was sealed by a huge boulder in front of the cave opening. Mary was surprised and shocked when she got there and saw the boulder rolled away – it was so big no one could have moved it by themselves. Just when she thought life had been at its saddest, she discovers that even Jesus' body is gone. She tells the other disciples "They've taken away my Lord and I do not know where they have put him." Two of them immediately run to where the tomb was and discover that Jesus' body was indeed gone. They ran back but Mary stayed there, crying.

When she saw a man she thought was the gardener, she asked him where Jesus' body was. She was so upset that she couldn't see that the man wasn't a gardener, it was Jesus. What Mary thought was the end of her life because Jesus was gone, turned out to be not true – Jesus was alive again. Even more amazing than new life in nature, Jesus was alive again. They had all watched him die and be buried and here he was, alive again.

New life. Easter is about new life, for sure. But more than that Easter is about a new kind of life. God sent Jesus, his son, to be with us because we didn't understand who God was. The priests, instead of helping people who were poor or injured, told them all the things they were doing wrong. They thought that this made God happy; that they were God's favorites.

Jesus came to show us that God doesn't have favorites. Jesus said if they really wanted to make God happy, they should love and take care of the people – whether they were important people or poor beggars. All people are children of God, beloved by God.

Jesus brought new life, he rose from the grave. And Jesus brought a new kind of life. He only had to say one word to open Mary's eyes, to open her heart. Her name: "Mary". It told her instantly that this was Jesus, because he knew her and loved her. He called her by name. "Mary". Jesus had come back from the dead to show us that nothing is more powerful than God. Nothing is more powerful than love – not even death. The power of God, the new life Jesus brought to the world when he came back, was love. And love values every single person; Jesus knows each of us, by name, by heart. Mary, Ben, Andy, Issac, Alex, Julia, Sophie, Judy, Sonia, Will, Jane. God knows your name. God knows our names by heart, loving each of us. We celebrate Easter every year – the first Easter was over 2000 years ago – and Easter is happening every minute. We turn to Jesus and he comes alive for us again, offering us a new beginning – a new kind of life. Alleluia Jesus is risen.