

## NOTES ON THE TEXT FOR EASTER ~ MATTHEW 28:1-10 ~ “THE WOMEN AT THE TOMB”:

~ BEFORE WE GET TO THE GARDEN ... ~

☞ Two Very Important Details!

☞ Mtt. 27:57 - 61 The Burial of Jesus “[Joseph of Arimathea] rolled a big stone in front of the entrance to the tomb and went away. Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were sitting there opposite the tomb” Jesus was **dead**. Matthew (and the other gospel writers) make a clear point to note that Jesus was dead and **buried** (as emphasized by the “big stone in front of the entrance to the tomb.” Matthew also makes it clear that the same women who were witnesses to Jesus’ death (Mtt. 27:56) and burial (mtt. 27:61) were also the same women who met Jesus three days later in the garden of our Easter text.

☞ Mtt. 27:62-66 The Guard Posted At The Tomb “So [the chief priests and the Pharisees] went and made [at Pilate’s order] the tomb secure by putting a seal on the stone and posting the guard.” Jesus’ body was NOT disturbed in the days following his burial. Even the soldiers guarding Jesus at his execution, along with Pilate, the chief priests and the Pharisees were all satisfied that Jesus was, in fact, dead. The chief priests and Pharisees, with Pilate’s permission, made sure Jesus’ body would NOT be disturbed by posting a **guard** at the tomb 24/7. Even further, these religious leaders put a **seal** on the tomb to provide evidence that the tomb was **not disturbed** in any way in the three days after Jesus’ death and burial. Comically, the religious leaders tried to cover up his resurrection with a fabricated story about the disciples stealing Jesus’ body in the night (Mtt. 28:11-15).

☞ Make That One More Important Detail!

☞ All four gospel writers make it clear that it was the **women** who were the **first witnesses** to the resurrection (more on that later!). They also report back to the disciples in Jerusalem. Each gospel writer has variations of Resurrection Sunday. For example, John’s gospel account has Peter and John running back to the tomb to confirm the women’s report (see “Resurrection Appearances” for a fuller comparison of each gospel writer’s account).

### THE TOMB, THE ANGELS, THE WOMEN, THE GARDEN AND JESUS

☞ v. 1 “After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week ...” By Jewish time, Sunday began at sundown on Saturday. So, the women would have started for the tomb early the next morning to arrive at the tomb at first light (Luke says they brought spices).

☞ v. 1 “... the other Mary ...” Presumably the mother of James and Joses (Mtt. 27:56).

☞ v. 1 “... went to look at the tomb ...” Probably to take spices to the tomb (as per Luke), but to what effect? The tomb is sealed. What were they expecting to see? Did they know there were guards posted at the tomb? If so, did they expect the guards to be gone? Did they think the earthquake (v. 2) had disturbed the tomb?

☞ v. 2 “There was a violent earthquake ...” Matthew is the only writer to record this second earthquake (separate from the quake recorded in Matthew 27:51b,54 at the death of Jesus?).

☞ v. 2-4 Matthew interrupts his narrative of the women in the resurrection story to give us some details about the state of things at the tomb. All four

gospel writers confirm that the events of these verses (the appearance of the angels and the guards) occurred before the women arrived on the scene in the garden of the tomb. Note - Matthew presents the most **dramatic scene** around the resurrection of Jesus: a great earthquake, the angle rolling back the stone, the angel's appearance was white like snow, the angel's presence was brilliant like lightning, and the Roman guards falling down like dead men.

☞ v. 5 “*The angel said to the women ...*” Matthew picks up the narrative after his excursus of verse 2-4 with the women as he had left them in verse 1.

☞ v. 5b-7 “*Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples: ‘He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.’ Now I have told you.*” This is the resurrection announcement ...the very heart of the Good News.

☞ v. 6 “*... just as [Jesus] said ...*” Jesus had instructed the disciples on numerous occasions about his suffering, death and resurrection (see Mtt. 16:21).

☞ v. 6 “*Come and see the place where he lay ...*” *horaó* - “see” The element of this word does not mean to “see” something with your eyes (ex. “I see you standing next to my friend.”). This word means to perceive ... to understand with your mind what you “see” before you (see I John 3:1 “See how great is the love God has lavished on us ...”). These women were not just looking around the tomb. They were connecting the dots, so to speak, about Jesus’ suffering, death and resurrection ... something the disciples had trouble understanding.

☞ v. 8 “*So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy ...*” How can the women be BOTH afraid and also filled with extreme joy? The women certainly are seized with **fear** (φόβος - phóbos), yet each this scene quickly shifts toward faith, witness, and (v. 9) worship (see also the shepherds fear of the angelic announcement turned to worship (Luke 2:9); the disciples fear during the stilling of the storm that quickly turns to awe at the power of God in Jesus (Mark 4:41). Fear opened the way for extreme joy at the Good News of the resurrection.

☞ v. 7, 8 “*... go quickly ... the women hurried away ... and ran ...*” The impetus of the Good News impelled the women to run - quickly - to spread the resurrection news to the other disciples in Jerusalem. BUT FIRST ... an encounter in the garden ...

☞ v. 9 “*Suddenly, Jesus met them, ‘Greetings!’*” The word “greetings” means “rejoice”, “be glad”, “be joyful”. Eugene Peterson (“The Message”) translates this greeting as “Good morning!” It is a warm greeting between close friends/family ... often accompanied with a warm embrace. But in this case, the women “*clasped [Jesus’] feet and worshiped him.*” The women saw and understood the significance of this moment. They are the first witnesses of the resurrection.

☞ v. 10 “*Go and tell ... go to Galilee ...*” There is movement to the Good News. The Good News cannot be bottled up or stored away. “The Good News of God is more ALIVE than anything that tries to kill God, more ALIVE than anything that tries to kill *the image of God* (imago dei) in all of us.”†† The Good News compels the disciples to leave Jerusalem - in great haste - and go to Galilee - where it all began at a wedding in Cana near Jesus’ hometown of Nazareth.

## QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION ...

1. Looking back over Lent, how do you “see” the presence of God through the images, parables, miracles and teachings of Jesus?

2. What have you learned about Jesus?
3. What has surprised you about the Good News this Lent?
4. Where have you seen evidence that the Church can be a force for good in this world?
5. Where do you “see” the Good News of the resurrection coming to life - in loud and dramatic ways and in quiet and subtle ways?
6. What is ALIVE in you?

**NOTES ...**

† New Testament scholars Marcus Borg and John Dominic Crossan begin their book, The Last Week (the week before the crucifixion as given in Mark’s gospel account) with the observation of two processions.

†† Rev. Lizzie McManus-Dail in her commentary with Sanctified Art.

Addendum: Map “Passion Week”

Addendum: Map “Fort Antonia”

Addendum: Chart “The Life of Christ: The Last Week”

Addendum: Chart “Resurrection Appearances”

Addendum: Chart “Jewish Sects”