

## Easter Sunday

Let's face it, by Easter Day Mary Magdalene had really been through the mill.

Having journeyed with Jesus through the last week of his life, Having watched him die,  
Having seen him laid stone cold in a tomb,  
Having waited to go and anoint his body,  
Having found the tomb empty  
and then having met the risen Jesus face to face,  
I guess its fair to say that her emotions would have been shot.

Its not surprising then, to find Mary by end of verse 16 of John 20 quivering on the ground at Jesus feet, hugging him for dear life.

To say that she was pleased to see him must be the understatement of the century.  
And having lost him once, I bet she had no intention of letting him go again.

But perhaps what is surprising is Jesus response to Mary (John 20.17) "don't hold on to me"!

Surely Jesus understood what Mary had gone through?  
Surely he understood her need to hug him and feel him close?

What then, might Jesus have been getting at when he said to her, "don't hold on to me"?

Well, as always with Jesus, he is surely making a spiritual point; teaching a spiritual lesson.

Mary had been used to having Jesus physically with her;  
A very real, flesh and blood presence.  
Someone who she could touch and hug.

But now Jesus' presence with her was going to change.  
At the last supper Jesus had spoken about the fact that he was leaving the earth for heaven.  
And his death and resurrection had been major steps on this journey heavenwards.  
Yes, having risen, he would spend 40 days, on and off, with his disciples, but he was different now.  
He now occupied a transformed, resurrection body.  
And he was about to ascend to the right hand of God on high.

And his presence with Mary, and all other believers would not be a physical one, but a spiritual one; by the Holy Spirit.

Mary needed to learn a new way of experiencing the presence of Jesus,  
Not through sight and sound and touch,  
But through the working of the Spirit Jesus would send.

Now, I don't know about you, but for me, physical touch is really important.  
I know that's a terrible admission.  
I mean, I'm British after all, and we Brits don't do emotion, let alone showing it  
through physical expression.

But just the act of giving someone a hug, or sitting next to someone is really  
comforting and has the capacity to build bonds or express feelings.

I sometimes think Jesus' first disciples must have been so much better off than us.  
I mean, they could see Jesus for a start. They can't have had any doubts that he was  
real!  
They could spend time with him and talk with him and do things with him and all that  
stuff that's possible with someone of flesh and blood.  
How wonderful it must have been

Is that what Mary felt as she hugged Jesus' feet?  
Maybe!

But Mary was going to need to learn a new way of relating to Jesus.  
A way that was not perhaps as easy as it had been when Jesus was physically on  
earth,  
But surely a better way?

For as Jesus ascended and sent the Spirit, Mary was going to learn that she could now  
relate to Jesus any time, anywhere.  
Jesus, in his new resurrection body and relating by his Spirit, could be in more than  
one place at any time.  
He could speak to more than one person at a time.  
He could do more than one miracle at a time.

Yes, whilst it had been great for Mary to have Jesus physically as a friend, she was  
about to experience a relationship with him on a whole new way,  
A way not limited by the constraints of time and space,  
But in a way that meant Jesus' presence with her every moment of every day for all  
eternity.

And this is the relationship that we can enjoy with Jesus too.

Whilst we may be sad that we can't physically see Jesus, or talk with him like we do  
with human friends, or even touch him and experience his physical presence, we can  
have a relationship of utter intimacy, each moment of each day.

But such a relationship does take effort,

And how true it is for us humans that out of sight is so often out of mind.  
Without Jesus' physical presence it's all too easy to pass the hours and the days  
without a thought our Saviour.

Frail and weak human beings that we are, we must make every effort to practice the  
presence of God.

Not that Jesus is only there when we think of him and conjure him up.

Far from it.

But that it will help us to build into our day times and actions that will remind us of  
Jesus' presence'

And it will help us to use those times constructively; to pray, to worship, to read  
God's Word, to be silent, the write, to do whatever it is that helps build our  
relationship with Jesus.

So, Mary had to learn to be with Jesus in a new way; for Jesus was on his way to  
heaven.

She also had to not cling on to him for a second reason.

John 20.17: "Go instead to my brothers and tell them..."

The temptation for Mary was surely, now she had Jesus back, to just cling on to him,  
to stay with him and never leave.

But Jesus had work for her to do.

She had a message to tell.

I fear that too often as a Church we are Mary's.

We have experienced the joy of meeting the risen Jesus.

Indeed we live out a relationship with Jesus each day.

But we are so busy clinging to Jesus, that we fail to hear him say, "Go and tell them."

Mary got it.

John 20.18: "Mary Magdalene went with the news..."

I trust we will too!