



It is peculiar that when Jesus meets Mary Magdalene at the tomb in today's gospel, he tells her not to touch him. Mary Magdalene was one of Jesus' most faithful disciples. You would think that when Jesus and Mary were reunited, they would embrace in joy at his victory over death. But Jesus not only tells her not to touch him, but implies that there will be a time when they can touch. He says, "Do not touch me for I have not yet ascended to my father." What is this strange comment of Jesus about? He seems to say: Do not touch me now but touch me later—do not touch me while I am here; touch me once I have gone away. What is Jesus attempting to say? His meaning is certainly obscure. But there is a saying in biblical interpretation: the obscure is an opportunity. The things we do not first understand are an opportunity to think more deeply, to investigate and discover a meaning we never expected.

This is what I would like to explore with you on this Easter to answer the question, why does Jesus tell Mary "Do not touch me now"? To answer that question I am going to call upon the services of one of the giants of Western Art—the Italian artist, Giotto. Everyone knows that a picture is worth a thousand words. About 700 years ago Giotto painted a resurrection scene based upon today's gospel.