

## St Pius & St Anthony Easter Sunday A Homily 2026 Year A Mt 28:1-10

Here we are Easter morning! Matthew's gospel just told us that Mary Magdalene and the 'other Mary' (It's the Blessed Mother Mary-a glimpse into how common a name Mary was in Jesus' time – Matt 27:56 (also, Jn 19:25) lists three Marys by the cross. If we compare all four resurrection morning stories, we hear of five different Marys – kind of like NT version of the old TV show 'Newhart' who had the 'Darryl' talk! One saying, "This is my sister Mary, this- my other sister Mary and here's my other sister Mary") Well, last Sunday when we read the Passion (Mt 27:61), we heard that two Mary's remained sitting there at a distance but still by the tomb as it was closed.

So, the two Marys must have gone home for just a little bit, to freshen up or gather supplies (to anoint-add fragrance to tomb area), and that is where today's gospel opens up – when the same two Marys return visit to the tomb.

*Note" It is Blessed Mother – Matthew 27:56 says "Mary the mother of James and Joseph" Earlier in Matthew 13:55, two of Jesus' brothers (kin-cousins?) are named James and Joseph. So, easy to assume that "the other Mary" is Mary the mother of Jesus- and wouldn't His mom be right there-Jn says so!)*

But here's a good question to ask, "Why was it important that Matthew mentions the **same two people** returning -the two Marys who had walked from the cross of Jesus to the grave to sit at the burial site?" The same two in both scenes. Well, Matthew seems more concerned than any other gospel writer to counter and check all the detracting, resurrection-deniers! Yes, we believe and know Jesus rose, but at the time back then, some people denied the resurrection! One of the circulating denials, Matthew is aware of, was the claim that the women went Easter morning to the wrong tomb address! Three men were crucified, so maybe that suggests a three-door scenario, like the old TV game show "Let's make a deal" Monty Hall would ask contestants, "What do you choose?-What's behind door number #1, number #2 or number #3?" The deniers said they were at wrong tomb.

Another example was a funny thing that happened last Christmas to my parents. One day about the end of January, a man shows up at their door all apologetic to my dad, and with a box of cookies and a story. He tells dad that 'not this box' but another box of delicious (he knows) cookies was delivered to their house. He ate them. The box had been misdelivered to the other house (similar house numbers)-his wife noticed and set the original box by the door to bring to my parents, when without talking to each other, her husband had come in, and thought, "Hey, what a treat" jumped into eating them. Dilemma, what do you do now? They looked up company online, and reordered another, bringing it to my dad, with a 'Sorry, but they were good!' The driver went to the wrong address.

So, some resurrection deniers in Matthew's time, claimed Jesus didn't rise from the dead, because the women went to wrong tomb! So, Matthew's emphatic that the same ones who saw burial and waited there late into the night, went back to the same tomb (only now, knowing the difference that it is empty!) And that is why Matthew emphasizes the angel's demonstration and invitation to the women (Mt 28:6) "He is not here, for he has been raised..... Come and see the place where he lay", like a hands-on experience, walk through and see for yourself!

I like how the Angel sits atop the stone leisurely in control of the scene, (no fear of Roman guards-opening and closing the stone door as he wants), as if like the show host, "Congratulations, you have chosen the right door!" Jesus is risen!

*(Interesting that stone was rolled back again, sealed when the Marys arrive, so is this saying Jesus could have risen out from the tomb, without the stone moving-like appearing behind locked doors next Sunday with Thomas story John 20-, or was it simply a further show of God being in control, even under the Roman Guards' noses, stone opening and rolled back, to then be opened again for the women a second time for 'proving' inspection - "Come and See - **He is gone-risen!**" )*

I suggest that Matthew uniquely is intent on addressing the deniers – whether through people's simple unbelief or even worse, the intentionally deceptive cover-up strategy of the Roman-Jewish Powers. Recall that Pilate (the empire) had been urged by priests (Mt 27:64-65) to first post guards, and then Matthew alone gives the details of the empire's (Jewish & Roman) conspiracy to sow doubt by planting false stories around, bribing the soldiers to spread untruths that they saw the apostles come steal Jesus' body overnight (Mt 28:15). Empires do that! But I love how the angel addresses specifically the women, 'You do not be afraid' (28:5) (Yet, as for the guards (& empire) -shaking in fear- vs 28:4—Well, they have every reason to fear – having worsened the sin of the crucifixion by more deceit!

But our Easter message is that grace overcomes sin, faithfulness overcomes fear, life overcomes death. Hope sees through! Truth and Trust are on the side of the women in this episode - the witness and courage of these women testify to the Resurrection. And the most moving detail of this Easter morning story is the fact that when the women act on faith (trust Jesus!), obedient to the command of the angel – guess who physically shows up? Jesus Christ Risen (28:9)! Matthew says "Jesus **met them on their way** and greeted them!" That is an awesome realization of Faith being Real. When we step out in faith, really trusting, then God appears! These Marys, embody an 'as-if' principle—act in faith, go forward trusting and the way opens up to them – Jesus appears risen!

We can ask, “Would Jesus have appeared if they lingered at tomb?” Would Jesus have appeared if they had ignored the angel & went home to do their own thing? Would they have missed Jesus, if they didn’t complete the angel’s call?

I see a similar process of faith in Christ occur, when God works through our own following through, like what happened with the Ten Lepers Jesus healed in Luke (17:11-19). Jesus told them to ‘Go to the Temple’ – they weren’t healed yet, but they went ahead as Jesus commanded – and they were healed on the way! Or how about the man born blind of John 9:1-41 (we heard about three weeks ago) who only had mud paste on his eyes and Jesus told to ‘Go wash in Siloam’. He couldn’t see yet, but he acted on Jesus command and was healed in the process. What if he didn’t go? What if he thought the command was silly? What if he pouted that Jesus didn’t cure him outright instantly? But He followed through, like the lepers followed through and most importantly like the women here followed through, and Jesus appears risen to them along the way. When we trust, and step out with genuine faith, then Jesus appears, opening our way. That is the power of resurrection and new life. Acting on Jesus’ word, and following through- embodying in ourselves Jesus’ works, it is then, that Jesus appears - risen and among us!