

Christof Wolf, S.J.

# The Moment Is For Me

An Ignatian Guide to Prayer

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# **FOURTH WEEK: RESURRECTION OF JESUS**

The center of the Christian faith is the resurrection. “But if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is empty and your faith meaningless,” writes St. Paul to the Corinthians. In all four gospels there is a unanimous report: The grave is empty. Jesus then appears, first to the women. This is very astonishing, since the testimony of women at that time was not considered credible. If the authors of that time had wanted to invent something credible, they would certainly have written that Jesus showed himself first to the disciples.

When Jesus finally appears to the disciples, they do not recognize him at first. He has to reveal himself explicitly. Obviously he is changed in a way that makes recognition very difficult. The encounter with the risen Christ seems to trigger fears at first. The disciples consider Jesus to be a ghost, since he can enter through closed doors. At the same time they can touch him, and he even eats something before their eyes. But Jesus remains with them in a bodily appearance only for a short time. His Spirit, however, will fill them at Pentecost and transform the anxious disciples into courageous witnesses of faith.

The question of what awaits us after death is an age-old question of humanity. Depending on our answer, we live differently. If everything ends with death, then I must find all happiness on earth. But what if I have a long illness, or what if I die early? How do I deal with the suffering, with the defeats, with the failure in my life? What can I hope for?

God became man in Jesus Christ, and since we are the image of God, the Spirit of God lives in us. One cannot surpass God’s ability to transform death into life. But it is ultimately up to our own free decision to believe in it and to use God’s gift of bringing back to life what is stuck and dead.

## MEDITATION 1

### John 20:1-18

<sup>1</sup>On the first day of the week, Mary of Magdala came to the tomb early in the morning, while it was still dark, and saw the stone removed from the tomb.

<sup>2</sup> So she ran and went to Simon Peter and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and told them, “They have taken the Lord from the tomb, and we don’t know where they put him.” <sup>3</sup> So Peter and the other disciple went out and came to the tomb. <sup>4</sup> They both ran, but the other disciple ran faster than Peter and arrived at the tomb first; <sup>5</sup> he bent down and saw the burial cloths there, but did not go in. <sup>6</sup> When Simon Peter arrived after him, he went into the tomb and saw the burial cloths there, <sup>7</sup> and the cloth that had covered his head, not with the burial cloths but rolled up in a separate place. <sup>8</sup> Then the other disciple also went in, the one who had arrived at the tomb first, and he saw and believed. <sup>9</sup> For they did not yet understand the scripture that he had to rise from the dead. <sup>10</sup> Then the disciples returned home.

<sup>11</sup> But Mary stayed outside the tomb weeping. And as she wept, she bent over into the tomb <sup>12</sup> and saw two angels in white sitting there, one at the head and one at the feet where the body of Jesus had been. <sup>13</sup> And they said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?” She said to them, “They have taken my Lord, and I don’t know where they laid him.” <sup>14</sup> When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus there, but did not know it was Jesus. <sup>15</sup> Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?” She thought it was the gardener and said to him, “Sir, if you carried him away, tell me where you laid him, and I will take him.” <sup>16</sup> Jesus said to her, “Mary!” She turned and said to him in Hebrew, “Rabbouni,” which means Teacher. <sup>17</sup> Jesus said to her, “Stop holding on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and tell them, ‘I am going to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’” <sup>18</sup> Mary of Magdala went and announced to the disciples, “I have seen the Lord,” and what he told her.

## Comment

Is there even a more beautiful cry of joy than Mary's "Rabbouni," after she recognized Jesus in the supposed gardener? His voice healed her from her grief. She can hardly believe that Jesus has really risen from the dead. She would like best to embrace him, full of joy, to throw herself at the feet of the revered Master. But Jesus eludes her. His "Stop holding on to me" heralds a new relationship, one that Mary still must learn.

God's love has overcome death. Even if we die, we will be transformed like Jesus through this love. This is the promise Jesus gives us: "I am going to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God."

And Mary goes back to the other disciples and announces the good news to them. That they do not want to believe her at first is reported elsewhere. They thought it was gossip, only something people said. For shouldn't they, the men, have seen the Risen One first of all? But Jesus shows himself first to the women, to those who did not abandon him in his suffering. He remains faithful to them: "Everyone who acknowledges me before others I will acknowledge before my heavenly Father."

## Suggestions

- First I prepare the scene for myself.
- Mary feels the joy of the resurrection in a very special way. Can I feel this joy and compare it with my own experiences?
- The suffering is overcome. How does the risen Jesus differ from the earthly Jesus?
- God's love overcomes death. Do I experience this love already here and now in my life?
- Do I bear witness to the risen Jesus? What situations and reactions do I remember?
- What does resurrection mean to me?

## Film

Wings of Desire

Germany, France 1987, 127 Minutes. Directed by Wim Wenders

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