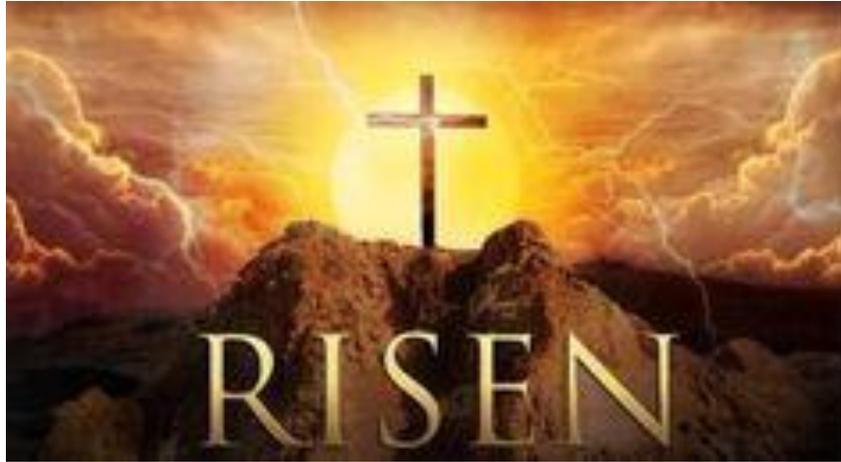


CELTIC EVENING PRAYER FOR  
*for*  
EASTERTIDE



We light this candle because Christ is the Light no darkness can extinguish

Christ is risen!  
**He is risen indeed! Alleluia!**

We come into the presence of the joyful Birther,  
**we come into the presence of the rising Son.**  
We come into the presence of the life-giving Spirit,  
**we come into the presence of the Three-in-One.**



WE OPEN OUR HEARTS TO GOD

Lord Jesus Christ, we come before you apart, yet united in your Spirit.

We come to remember your glorious resurrection,  
your appearances to your disciples and  
the hope and courage that filled their hearts.  
**Lord Jesus, as you came to them, so come to us.**

Christ Jesus, in the light of your risen presence  
and in union with the first frail apostles, we say sorry:  
**for not weighing your words,  
for not sharing your trials,  
for not believing your promises.**

Risen Christ,  
disperse the sin from our souls, as the mist departs from the hills.  
Be in what we do, inform what we say and redeem who we are.

So now Lord, we come before you to praise you, to thank you and to worship  
you for all you have done for us.

With new understanding of that which you desire to do through us:  
**Lord Jesus, as we come to you, so come to us.**

**Amen.**

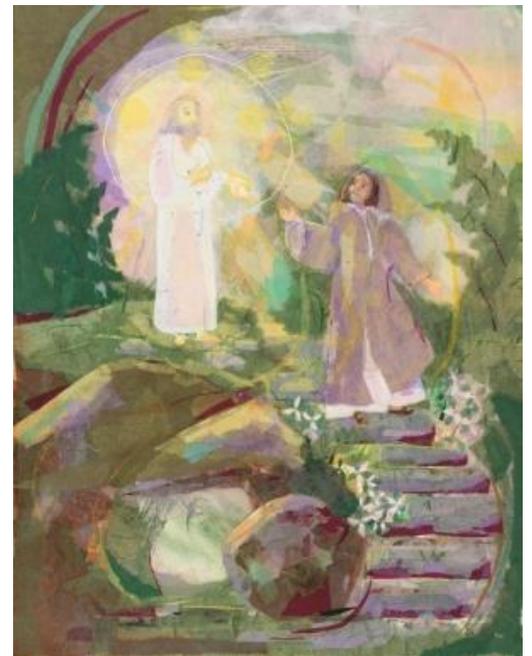
## SCRIPTURE

### *John 20 : 11-18*

Now Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot.

They asked her, 'Woman, why are you crying?'

'They have taken my Lord away,' she said, 'and I don't know where they have put him.' At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realise that it was Jesus.



He asked her, 'Woman, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?'

Thinking he was the gardener, she said, 'Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him.'

Jesus said to her, 'Mary.'

She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, 'Rabboni!' (which means 'Teacher')

Jesus said, ‘Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’’

Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: ‘I have seen the Lord!’ And she told them that he had said these things to her.

### *Acts 1 : 3*

To them, he presented himself alive after his Passion, by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking of the Kingdom of God.

## MEDITATION

From Easter Day, we enter 40 days of the period known as ‘Eastertide’, which takes us up to Ascension Day. During this time, the risen Jesus appears to many people (accounts appear in all four Gospels) and they are described by St Paul (1 Cor 15 : 3-8). It is noteworthy, that in this passage, Paul omits to say that Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene – let alone that he appeared to her first. The reason for this may be that Paul was aware that the audience to whom he was seeking to convey the evidence for Jesus’ resurrection would not have taken seriously the witness of a woman. However, it is almost certain that Paul would have known of it.

The Gospel writer, St John, writing for an equally patriarchal society, had no such qualms and it is, indeed, quite remarkable that, post resurrection, it is a woman who is the first to declare ‘I have seen the Lord’. The testimony of women wasn’t trusted in antiquity (they were not called to witness in courts of law). Jewish men, still today, recite daily a prayer that contains the words ‘Thank you for not making me a woman’! If the resurrection were not true, then Mary would not have been a good choice for the invention of a story – not only was she a woman, but she had had seven demons driven from her (Luke 8:2). The truth of the matter is that Jesus, in his infinite wisdom, chose to appear first to a woman, who had faithfully served him – notwithstanding her gender, nor her past. This bears witness to St Paul’s declaration that ‘There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus’ (Gal 3:28).

Also in chapter 20 of John’s Gospel, we read of the appearance of Jesus to the disciples behind locked doors (in the absence of Thomas) and then again, in the

presence of (Doubting) Thomas. In Chapter 21, we hear of the breakfast on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, where Jesus asks Peter if he loves him and commissions him to ‘feed my sheep’.

When Jesus first meets Mary after his resurrection, she couldn’t see Jesus for her grief. That is what grief can do to people. So far as she was concerned, Jesus was dead and she had come to anoint his body for burial - such was her love for him. It was only when she heard him call her name that she realises that He is risen.

Jesus spoke her name – and by speaking released her from her grief. There are going to be times when we suffer from grief. We may grieve for the loss of loved ones. And it is at times like this that we need to listen for Jesus’ voice calling us. Jesus deals with each person’s need differently. He treats us as individuals. He calls us by name.

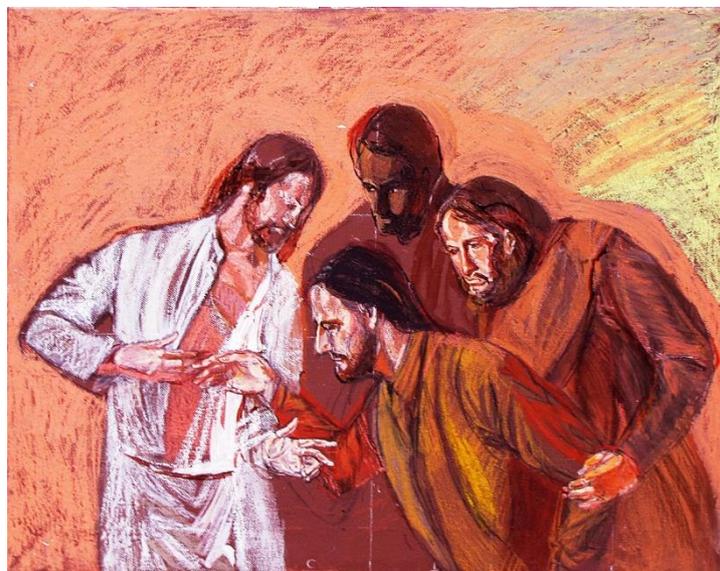
Looking at the four post Resurrections stories in John, we see that each person hears Jesus speaking to them personally. Mary simply needed to hear Jesus’ voice and her grief was healed.

The disciples behind locked doors needed to hear Jesus speak peace to them to release them from their fear.

Thomas said he needed to touch Jesus physically before he would believe, but it is when Jesus speaks to Thomas that he responds, ‘my Lord and my God’.

And finally, Peter needed to hear words of forgiveness and reinstatement from Jesus to overcome his grief in denying Jesus.

Each in their own way needed to hear Jesus speaking to them.



## WE REFLECT

Jesus still speaks to us today – words of encouragement, peace, comfort and healing. He speaks them to us as individuals. We have to be still enough and willing enough to hear his voice. Let's now take some time to listen for the voice of our risen Lord as he calls our name. As he waits to speak to us.

## WE PRAY

Risen Christ, you revealed yourself to Mary in the garden.

**Reveal yourself to us in the silence.**

You revealed yourself to Thomas when he touched the scars in your body.

**Reveal yourself to us in the scars of the world.**

You revealed yourself to the disciples as they walked the road to Emmaus.

**Reveal yourself to us as we walk this path of strange and distressing times.**

You revealed yourself to many as they met beneath the skies.

**Reveal yourself to us in the wonder of your Creation.**

**Reveal yourself, Lord, we pray.**

**Amen.**

## OUR PRAYERS FOR THE WORLD

**We offer our personal prayers to God**

Heavenly Father, we offer to you our prayers for the **whole world** – for it is, indeed, the whole world, which now suffers. Rich and poor, sick and healthy, mighty and lowly.

United in our humanity,

we bring before you all the people and places that are on our heart ...

We pray for all who cannot pray  
and for those who have no-one to pray for them ...

We remember all who are facing death and those who grieve and mourn.

May they know the comfort and peace of your presence.

We remember all who have died.

May they rest in the eternal light and peace of your love.

Lord Jesus Christ, Light of the world,  
by your Cross you have overcome all darkness that oppresses:

**Shine on us**

that we may grow and live together in your love,  
which makes us one with all humanity.

**Amen.**

## **THE LORD'S PRAYER**

*( In the words of the New Zealand Prayer Book )*

Eternal Spirit,  
Earth-maker, Pain Bearer, Life-Giver,  
Source of all that is and that shall be;  
Father and Mother of us all,  
Loving God, in whom is heaven:  
The hallowing of your name echo through the universe;  
The way of your justice be followed by the peoples of the world;  
Your heavenly will be done by all created beings;  
Your commonwealth of peace and freedom  
sustain our hope and come on earth.

With the bread we need for today, feed us.  
In the hurts we absorb from one another, forgive us.  
In times of temptation and test, strengthen us.  
From trial too great to endure, spare us.  
From the grip of all that is evil, free us.  
For you reign in the glory of the power that is love,  
now and forever. Amen.



# BLESSING

Deep peace of the empty tomb.  
Deep peace of the morning garden.  
The eye of the Risen Christ be upon us in waking and sleeping.  
The Risen Christ beside us.  
The Risen Christ within us.  
The God of life go with us.  
this day and always.  
**Amen.**

