

As I exited my house Good Friday morning, I discovered some women of the parish in my backyard, in my garden, cutting plants. Yes, a garden is where it started, and, in a garden, it ended. As John tells us, “Now in the place where he had been crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb...” There would be women there, as well.

We can imagine Mary walking through this garden, perhaps asking herself, “If only he hadn't come in to Jerusalem during this time of trouble. If only his disciples had hidden him somewhere else. If only...”

Mary was probably trying in her mind to do what all of us try to do at some point or another: To reverse the past, to go backward in the story. We've all done it (or will) in one-way or another.

You're saying to yourself, “If only I hadn't been fiddling with that radio in the car that one moment. If only I hadn't gone to that party that night. If only...” We would love to erase and even reverse the course of our story in such instances.

Such stories of regret started at the very beginning of creation. The story in Genesis 3, takes us back to the fall of humanity and it is a story of something that wrecked, something that went wrong in the Garden.

What Mary will eventually see goes way beyond just a personal crisis; she will face a reversal of an ancient curse. What she will witness will be God reversing the whole story of the universe.

Mary goes into a garden that is also a grave place. We are told earlier in John that Jesus, after he had been crucified, was taken down and put into a borrowed tomb (God has a sense of humor) of a rich man.

This garden was not like some sort of memorial garden of a cemetery, but a true garden. It was a working garden. It would have had vegetables growing there and perhaps even some trees, with fruit hanging upon them.

Mary walks into this garden and she thinks that she has encountered a grave robbing, as all she sees there are cloths that would have been used to wrap up a corpse.

She then runs back and tells the disciples that, “They have taken the Lord from the tomb...” They run there and then return home. If we had read the next passages, we will find that Mary stayed outside the tomb, weeping.

Genesis tells us that at that beginning point of history, in that other Garden, when the woman and man ate of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, a curse came upon the universe in which their bodies would eventually turn into dust, in which the world that they will live in is full of thorns and of thistles.

Jesus took that curse upon himself. Those thorns that God said would appear on the ground were crushed down onto his head. He, the King of the entire universe, was taken down from the cross, he was a dead body, he was a corpse, he was under the bondage to corruption and decay, and Mary expected to find him in that condition.

She was probably bringing with her spices. She was bringing some embalming stuff to try to keep him preserved just a little bit longer, but she doesn't find him there. She doesn't find the corruption of that first Garden there. Instead, she finds angels there.

We are told that in Genesis, after the fall, an angel was placed outside the Garden with a sword preventing any entrance.

These angels, however, tell Mary *to go into the garden*.

Now completely confused, she thinks that her world has come to some sort of a zombie apocalypse when someone speaks to her and says, "Why are you crying, whom are you looking for?" She thought that he was a gardener. ***George Herbert**, the poet, wrote: "Death used to be an executioner, but the gospel has made him just a gardener."

Jesus doesn't say to Mary—"Ta Da! April Fool's, It's me—Jesus!" He doesn't say, "Stop crying, woman. It's all good!" And he certainly doesn't scold her for lack of faith. He meets her where she is. He asks her to tell him about it and listens as she explains it all over to him.

In the other Garden, sin entered it. When sin comes into our life it alienates us from one another, and it alienates us from God. The story is told that in the very beginning, when the woman and man ate of the fruit, suddenly they realized they were naked and they started to hide from one another. The community that they had had was now broken.

The Scripture tells us that in the cool of the day that God would come, and he would be there in the midst of the human beings. When he came that day, after sin, after death had entered the world, Scripture says that the man and the woman were hiding.

They were hiding in the Garden. So that when he calls their names—Adam, where are you, Eve, where are you—they shrink back, they don't want to see him.

In this garden of John, something entirely different takes place. In Jesus, God walks upon the garden once again and calls us again, by name. He says to her, "Mary!" and then she sees who it is. She does not try to hide, but she embraces God, for it is Love and Life that summons her, not condemnation. The curse is broken, for he has risen

Jesus tells her, "Go to my brothers."

Those brothers, they were hiding up in a room somewhere. He will come to them, call for them. Jesus walked into Mary's story and into my story and into yours.

The kind of sin and fear that keeps us hiding from one another and hiding from God, Jesus walks right out and turns it around. He reverses it. He died that we might die with him to rise with him.

He says Mary, “Go to my brothers and tell them, ‘I am going to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’”

The Father of Jesus will now become the Father of the disciples because, once ascended, Jesus can give them the Spirit that comes from the Father and they can be reborn as God’s children (Jn 3:5). And God will once again, walk in the Garden with us, with all of our loved ones who have gone before us, because *he has risen*.