



Giotto, Noli Me Tangere ('Do not touch me')

DARE TO DREAM

Introductory Session- Eastertide

Week Beginning 4th April

Before you begin the prayer...

Letting go can involve a real struggle. When Jesus dies on the cross his disciples were full of different emotions, confused, angry, frightened, and guilty. During our seven weeks of Eastertide, we will encounter the different disciples and their response to what has happened. We will journey with them on the road to Emmaus, totally flummoxed by what they have witnessed and how they just do not understand. We will experience the fear of the apostles as they hide away and the insecurity of Thomas who, needs physical contact with Jesus to find his way to believing. Then there is Mary of Magdala, paralysed with sadness and grief. Into the lives of each of these comes Jesus, reassuring, offering peace and showing himself in the food that he eats and in the bread that he breaks. . He demonstrates his love and forgiveness, even though the men abandoned him, afraid to be seen with him.

Each of us has had to experience the death of someone very close to us. And all of us have experienced 'death' in some form: in the loss of important relationships, ministries, etc. We feel like half our Spirit has died with them. We don't feel whole anymore. Our hearts are torn apart. Like Mary, we wonder how we will go on.

What do these Easter accounts of the Risen Jesus have to say to us today? Can we relate to the individuals? How do we respond to Jesus who consistently tells the disciples to 'Go and make disciples of all the nations' and in turn commands us to do the same?

Video - Watch and listen to Sarah Adams

Prayerfully read this passage from the Gospel of John 20:11-18

Mary stood weeping outside the tomb, and as she wept she stooped to look into the tomb; and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had lain, one at the head and one at the feet. They said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him." Saying this, she turned round and saw Jesus standing, but she did not

know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom do you seek?" Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away." Jesus said to her, "Mary." She turned and said to him in Hebrew, "Rab-bo'ni!" (which means Teacher). Jesus said to her, "Do not hold me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to my brethren and say to them, I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God." Mary Mag'dalene went and said to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord"; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

- Take some time to ponder on the words you have just read.
- Notice if there is anything, a word or phrase that stands out for you.
- Read the passage again and then reflect upon all or some of these questions: if you are doing this as a family or a group, make sure everyone is given the opportunity to speak.

Personal Reflections

- Imagine you are Mary – how are you feeling at the beginning and end of this account?
- Think back to a time of personal loss – it may be that of someone you have loved or it might be related to the loss of a job you loved doing or a ministry that you had to leave, or a situation in your life that had to change. Now consider – how did you experience the call to New Life in those situations?
- This Easter Season – what is Jesus calling you to? How are you being asked to reclaim and reaffirm your own life, to live the Paschal Mystery of life – death – resurrection?

Now thinking about your parish and local community

- What aspects of parish life are you afraid of losing in the future?
- In what ways do you think your parish might be closed to moving forwards (e.g. fear of losing Mass times, own priest, too few active parishioners etc.)

- What would it be helpful to relinquish, so that the parish can flourish in the future?
- In the first letter of St. Peter he says: 'Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.' How would you, as a parish community, respond to being asked this question?
- Pope Francis warns against 'gray pragmatism' and having a 'tomb psychology'. Where do you see evidence of that in your parish? Where does your community 'radiate light and communicate life.?

Action

- Create an Eastertide 'Dare to Dream' programme that encourages young and old to participate and reflects your community as one which 'radiates life and communicates life', encouraging others to want to join you.

Finish with a prayer asking the Holy Spirit for the grace to respond.

