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Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples,  
“I have seen the Lord” John 20:18

## Jesus Appears to Mary Magdalene

**JOHN 20:11–18** <sup>11</sup>But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; <sup>12</sup>and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. <sup>13</sup>They said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?” She said to them, “They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.” <sup>14</sup>When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. <sup>15</sup>Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?” 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.” <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, “Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’” <sup>18</sup>Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, “I have seen the Lord”; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

**W**hile Peter and the beloved disciple return to their homes, Mary Magdalene remains vigilant at the tomb. As a woman who dearly loves Jesus, she is overwhelmed by her loss and cries tears of grief (verses 11, 13, 15). When the risen Jesus asks her why she is weeping and for whom she is looking, she sees him but does not realize it is Jesus. Only when he calls her by name, “Mary,” does she recognize Jesus (verse 16). The calling of her name enables Mary to give Jesus her full attention and to create the personal bond with him that establishes belief.

Knowing that Jesus is truly risen, she instinctively embraces him. But Jesus asks her not to “hold on” to him because he had not yet returned to the Father (verse 17). She is trying to hold on to Jesus as if he were still in his earthly, physical body. Mary and the other disciples must learn a new way of knowing Jesus. His permanent abiding with them is to be not in the flesh but in the Spirit. His everlasting presence with them will come only with the gift of the Holy Spirit as he ascends to the Father. Mary and all who love Jesus will then be able to embrace him in a new and much better way.

Mary Magdalene becomes the first to announce the good news of Jesus’ resurrection to others. When she proclaims, “I have seen the Lord” (verse 18), she is referring to an experience far deeper and more real than simply a visual sighting. It is a life-transforming experience, a deeply personal and mystical encounter, an experience of intimate and loving recognition. Mary has moved from the darkness to the light of faith. She has seen Jesus as Lord, and she cannot help but become the messenger of that good news to others.

Because Mary Magdalene was the premiere witness to the resurrection and, at the command of Jesus, the first to announce the electrifying gospel of the risen Lord to others, the early church rightly bestowed upon her the title of “apostle to the apostles.” Her announcement, “I have seen the Lord,” is the same credential used by Paul to insist on his own authority as an apostle: “Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord?” (1 Cor 9:1). The church’s belief in the resurrection originated with Mary Magdalene’s evangelical witness.

## Reflection and discussion

- What strikes me most about the encounter between Jesus and Mary Magdalene in the garden?

- In what way is Mary's Magdalene's experience of the risen Jesus much more than sense perception? Why was she unable to hold on to Jesus?

- The church's belief in the resurrection originated with the apostolic witness of Mary Magdalene. In what way can she be a model of faith for me?

## Prayer

*Risen Lord, you have called me by name to experience a deep communion of life with you. Turn my weeping to joy, my despair to hope, and my disbelief to the fullness of confident trust.*