

A Easter Day 2026  
Saint Barnabas's Church, Falmouth MA  
The Rev David Rider  
April 5, 2026

John 20:1-18

Christ is risen, and today we taste, touch and see the miracle of His victory over sin and death

In our scripture reading and prayers this past week, we have watched and walked with Jesus as he freely endured suffering and death on the Cross for you and me

With full-throttle paradox and human emotion, we witnessed Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem, his confrontation with Caiaphas and Pilate, his desertion in Gethsemane, his final forgiving of the crowds as he breathed his last breath, his death and descent into hell

On this Easter Day, the holiest and most glorious of all, we celebrate the power of Christ's resurrection and his claiming the world unto himself

Imagine what it must have been like to walk (or run) in Mary Magdalene's shoes

We don't know much about Mary Magdalene, who remains among the most mysterious and elusive figures in Scripture

We do know, however, that she had the painful honor of standing by the Cross—long after others had fled the scene—as Jesus' broken body was removed for burial

Jesus had been buried hastily and then, three days later, the loyal Mary Magdalene came to complete the rites of preparation

The power of Christ's resurrection was not immediately apparent, and when Mary Magdalene arrived at the tomb, she thought she was confronting a second trauma of bodily desecration and theft

When the risen Christ speaks to Mary Magdalene and calls her by name, her tears of sorrow turn to tears of joy and the world is changed forever

From the foot of the Cross to the door of the tomb, Mary Magdalene endures rattling chaos that transforms into contagious joy in her first witness to the resurrection

The Risen Lord calls her by name—Mary!—and her life is turned upside down

Once a rag-tag group of dispirited followers, Mary Magdalene, Simon Peter and others encounter the Risen Lord, and they band together into a pulsating community witness

In Matthew's more dramatic version, the earth quakes, the guards' emotional circuits are fried by fear, and everyone scrambles out from the empty tomb with trembling and joy to tell others about this life-changing news

On Easter Sunday 2020, when the world had shut down for the pandemic and in-person worship was forbidden, I served as a Sunday Associate priest in a large Manhattan church

One of three clergy trying to cope with a strange new Easter, we all agreed to videotape an energized 30-second lead-in to online worship, and I did my part

As regular morning jogger and after becoming sufficiently winded at full running speed, I whipped out my iphone and taped my trying to catch up with Mary Magdalene as she sprinted into the city, overwhelmed and excited, to tell others about the resurrected Jesus

I admitted that I could not keep up with her frantic pace, but I knew she had something big to say and that I hoped our online viewers would experience the excitement and big news

It was slightly too clever, something we all tried to do in those harrowing early days of the pandemic, but Mary's visceral reality has remained with me since that breathless jog

On Palm Sunday at Saint Barnabas, we walked around the parking lot while waving palms to begin our worship to get into the spirit

It would not be too crazy if we all ran around downtown Falmouth together to begin our Easter worship, imagining that we are trying to keep up with frazzled Mary Magdalene as she sprints into resurrection life

Skip the mellow sunrise Easter gig on Nobska Beach and strap on your running shoes to embrace resurrection joy!

Whether we drove, walked or sprinted to church this morning, I pray we are forever transformed and we continue to gather as a community of miraculous expectation

In our own lives, with our stories of pain and suffering, we know the paradox of life and death, not to mention the rollercoaster of emotion that accompanies our human condition

Like Mary Magdalene, we also bring our own textured lives to the Cross and grave

In doing so, we embrace a God who fully identifies with our humanity upon the Cross, this God brings life out of death and hope out of despair

On this day, our God has acted, and our vocation—like that of Mary Magdalene—beckons us to proclaim the many ways we have seen the Risen Lord

Once the risen Christ speaks to Mary Magdalene, her anguish subsides, but her adrenaline never wanes

As a community of the resurrection, we also run, not walk, into this frazzled world to speak Good News where spiritual hunger abounds

Like Mary, we move from the pain of Good Friday to embrace miraculous expectation for our individual and common lives

Whether amid our weekly ministry at *A Place at the Table* or last week's social justice protest at the No Kings rally, we witness that our risen Christ breaks into human affairs with a palpable grace that puts mettle in our spines and makes us conduits of God's quest for reconciliation in this turbulent world

After her encounter with the risen Christ, Mary Magdalene is filled with miraculous expectation, which could be the best yardstick by which we measure our ministry efforts today

If you leave with nothing else today, I bid you to embrace our daily ministries as acts of miraculous expectation

Yet, the greatest tragedy of Easter would be to hoard this Good News for ourselves

Notice that Mary Magdalene does not retreat to some gauzy day spa to bask in the glow of her divine encounter

No, she sprints back to the city to proclaim her Good News with anyone she meets

In this spirit, let me be so bold as to proclaim Saint Barnabas's primary vocation as an outwardly directed community of celebration, not mired in our woes but boldly sharing the Easter Good News with the world around us

Christ died and is risen not to give us a fleeting spiritual buzz

The Easter promise transforms us from scruffy wanderers into road-tested witnesses to resurrection life

As such, the mark of our Easter witness remains the joyous embrace of divine mystery, not an angry denunciation of an inadequate world

As Easter Christians, we live with abiding expectation of God's miraculous hand at work in this world, and we beckon the spiritually hungry of this community to join us in a pilgrimage of divine discovery

Such is the witness of the Easter Church in an Easter world

We taste, touch and experience this risen Christ throughout our earthly journey, whether powerfully as Paul on the road to Damascus or in the slower—sometimes mundane—formation of daily spiritual life

The final question of Easter remains: will we ourselves, touched by Jesus, now rise and do life differently?

Our answer—our communal and our individual answer—tells us everything about our hope and quality of life during this earthly journey

Easter remains both a day of celebration and decision: will you seek the living among the dead, or will you give witness to God's resurrection power that flows through you and into this world?

In our outreach and service to Upper Cape Cod, do we offer a tepid broth of comfort or a passionate witness that God has acted and continues to act for justice, reconciliation and transformation in this beautiful if broken world we call home

On this joyous day, we use Scripture, song and prayer to live into the mystery of resurrection faith

It remains a mystery we will never fully fathom, and yet a mystery that claims us and directs our lives

For the coming fifty days, let us embrace the mystery of God's ultimate gift of new life, and let us live as a community of miraculous expectation

As resurrection Christians, do we swing for the fences or re-set our stiff upper lips into business as usual?

Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again. Alleluia.