

Lucia Lloyd's sermon
Easter Vigil, 2010
Matthew 28:1-10

The risen Christ just walks up to Mary Magdalene and the other Mary and says, "hello." It is startling in its simplicity: "hello."

Matthew describes the resurrection as an earth-shattering event. His account of the events of Easter morning begins with an earthquake. The angel who descends and rolls back the stone has an appearance "like lightning." The guards are shaking with terror. And the angel turns to the two Marys and speaks to them about their fear, "Do not be afraid. I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for he has been raised, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell the disciples, 'He has been raised from the dead, and indeed he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him.' This is my message for you." The emotion and energy they felt must have been overwhelming. We can understand why they feel both fear and great joy, why they would run to tell the disciples.

And it is while they are running that Jesus meets them and says, "hello." He does not give them an explanation of why the resurrection happened, or even how the resurrection happened. He does not announce a systematic theology. The risen Christ just walks up to Mary Magdalene and the other Mary and says, "hello."

Our Easter vigil walks us through some of the most significant events in salvation history: the creation of the universe, the earth and the stars; the parting of the Red Sea as the Israelites are liberated from their oppressors. It describes the dry bones being given flesh and life; it envisions the time when God will gather the faithful remnant and bring them home in rejoicing, restoring their fortunes before their eyes. It walks us toward the resurrection itself, what everything else has been leading to.

Now it becomes clear why it was important for these women to be there at the foot of the cross. Being present to witness the agony of the crucifixion means they know on a deep level the enormity of what has been overcome. They have witnessed the power of suffering, sin, and death. Then the Risen Christ says, "hello."

The most powerful events of our lives won't fit into words. The intensity of love is not something we can sum up in words, or explain or even describe. It simply is. "Hello."

The word "hello" in the original Greek is *chairete*, the greeting people use every day. It is the same word the angel Gabriel uses when he greets Mary at the annunciation. The Latin translation is, "Ave, Maria." In previous generations, English speakers have translated it, "Hail, Mary." But the best translation is the simplest: "hello." "Hello, Mary."

If we are looking for a very literal translation, it would be "rejoice" or "be glad." The very next words the risen Christ says are "Do not be afraid." I could tell you that the words of the risen Christ turn out to be, "Don't worry, be happy." "Be glad; do not be afraid." I could point out that the root of the Greek word *chairete* is the same as the root of the Greek word *eucharist*. In the eucharist we rejoice, we give thanks, we are glad, because the risen Christ is with us.

We would think that having the Almighty God suddenly appear to us would completely blow our minds, and sometimes it does. And sometimes, it is like having someone we loved with all our heart, walk up to us and say "hello." And we are glad. We are so deeply glad that we don't know what to do.

The two Marys are overwhelmed by seeing Christ raised from the dead. They run to him, fall at his feet, grab his ankles, and worship him. He tells them, "Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me." Jesus reminds them of what the angel has told them, "go quickly and tell his disciples, he has been raised from the dead." The two Marys have been witnesses of the crucifixion, and they have been witnesses of the resurrection. Now their task is to bear witness, to tell the message. Their task is not to explain or to justify, their task is simply to tell what they have witnessed. To tell that Jesus has walked up to them and said hello.

Moral teachings are all well and good, and we need them. But what each of us truly needs is to encounter how deeply we are loved. God becomes incarnate to demonstrate to us the lengths God will go to to connect with us. God suffers and dies to demonstrate to us the depths God will go to to share our pain. God rises again to demonstrate to us the vastness of God's forgiveness and love for us.

At the great moments of our lives, words are superfluous. We want to say, “You had me at hello.” The joy is in being together, the joy is in the love.

It is beautiful to celebrate Easter with trumpets and magnificent cathedrals. But what matters most is connecting with the event of the first Easter, the risen Christ walks up and says, “Hello.” And we worship him. The risen Christ walks up and says, “Rejoice! Be glad!” And we rejoice. We are glad. The risen Christ walks up and says, “*chairete*” and we celebrate the eucharist.

It is good news that we hear, and good news we have to tell the world. Hello! Christ is risen! Alleluia!