

*.....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. 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.' When she had said this, she turned round and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, 'Woman, why are you weeping? For whom are you looking?' 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!' - John 20.11-18*

## **Gardener's World**

### **"Supposing him to be the gardener"**

This second half of John's resurrection story is one we always find touching as the faithful Mary creeps to the tomb on Easter morning to prepare and take care of the body of her Lord.

We smile at her failure to recognise the risen Jesus, but soon realise that we too would have not realised who he was - not only would she have been overcome at his body's disappearance, but she was not expecting to see him at all, and to cap it all, it is suggested that he had changed in appearance, and Mary was not the only one who was puzzled.



**Rembrandt's "Resurrected Christ appears to Mary Magdalene "(1638)**

In this painting by Rembrandt, Jesus is dressed as a gardener. Note the sombrero-like hat and spade!

But I keep coming back to the phrase, '**Supposing him to be the gardener**' - because in a positive way, he IS the gardener! He is the one who planted the first garden, which we hear about early in Genesis. We might wonder what sort of Garden He planted and called Eden - I don't think it was a garden such as we understand the word today. It was special in that it was God's hands that planted it and it was, we believe, heaven on earth (the name Eden probably means 'bliss' or 'delight').

We know that he planted an orchard, and there was a significant tree in the middle of it. We know that the great rivers of the Tigris and Euphrates ran through and watered it, and so can we suggest that he added some mountains to give it height, and so a valley, and a wide variety of every kind of tree and plant; lakes and seas as water features, and animals to live in it - and in due course he saw that it was very good.

And we know that events around Easter took place in two gardens. The first is called Gethsemane, a garden of prayer and arrest. The second is a garden of execution and burial, of tombs and mourning, a place where another tree was planted on which the gardener hung and died.

Yet this second garden, at Calvary was transformed and became a garden of resurrection, of the defying of death, of new life, new colour and vibrancy like the first green shoots on the burned trees in Australia after the recent fires there, or the new grass coming from parched land as the first rains come.

The hymn is so relevant:-

"Now the green blade riseth, from the buried grain,  
Wheat that in the dark earth many days has lain;  
Love lives again, that with the dead has been:  
Love is come again, like wheat that springeth green".

Or you might think of the children's Easter Gardens, and like this children's hymn:-

"All in an Easter garden,  
Where water lilies bloom,  
The angels gave their message  
Beside an empty tomb:  
"The Lord is here no longer,  
Come, see where once he lay;  
The Lord of life is risen indeed,  
For this is Easter day."

And we know that the gardener is still at work and eventually another garden awaits, again with a tree and a river running through it - a new Jerusalem, coming down from heaven (*Revelation 21.2*)

Mary Magdalene was confused - "Where have you laid him?" she asks, and it is only when she hears her name, spoken in a special way by a special friend that she realises who it is that she is with. So when you next look for Jesus - and if you think him to be missing, don't be afraid to speak and ask, even the gardener, and hear him say your name in that way that only he can, and know that he is God with us, and "He is Risen",

Fr Bob