

Mary Magdalene got a shock when she arrived at the tomb. She was expecting things to be as they were when Jesus was buried. But as soon as she arrived, she notices that things were not as she expected. She runs to tell the other disciples about what has happened. She has already made up her mind that someone has taken the body of Jesus out of the tomb. When Peter and the other disciple arrive, they look intently at the scene as they try to understand what they are seeing. Eventually the other disciple sees and believes. He believes that Jesus is alive. He now understands. There is a hint at the end of the story about how this other disciple came to understand. He remembered all that had been said in the Scriptures. Now he understood that Jesus gives new life to the world.

Each year we are reminded of this scene from that first Easter Sunday morning. It is as though the story of Mary Magdalene, Peter, and the other disciple is a story about all of us. Their story tells us something about Easter faith. There is a pattern in that story. It begins with noticing something – in this case, noticing that something was not as it should be. Then it moved to looking again at what was there and trying to take in the whole scene, looking for clues about what might have happened. The third step in the pattern is to finally understand what they were seeing.

We see this pattern so often in the Gospel stories about the resurrection of Jesus. There is something that is not quite right, that is not what they were expecting. So, the disciples begin to look more carefully. Then finally, they understand. Often the final understanding comes when they recognise the risen Jesus in their midst. At other times, it comes when they go back and read the Scriptures. The Scriptures shed light on Jesus and his destiny. But equally, in the light of their experience of the risen Jesus, they see things in the Scriptures that they hadn't seen before.

This pattern is at work in our own lives as we grow in faith. Even though we are not at the empty tomb and aren't looking for the body of Jesus, we do encounter things that reveal to us that he is risen. In a unique way, we encounter the risen Jesus in the sacraments of the church. This is particularly so with the Eucharist and Baptism. With both of these sacraments we go through the same process of coming to understand what happened to Jesus. What we see is bread and wine, and water and oil. Yet what we do with them in the liturgy makes us look at

them more intently and recognise that they are drawing us into more than what we would normally do with these things. The point of recognition comes when we believe that these sacraments have been filled with the Holy Spirit and they give us life.

Last night there were people who were baptised and received holy communion for the first time. They are people that we journeyed with, especially during Lent, as they prepared for their baptism. Today we baptise two babies, and we will welcome them as the newest members of this community. Just like the first followers of Jesus, we will only begin to understand what is happening in baptism if we look to the Scriptures. St Paul tells us that when we were baptised, we went down in the water, symbolising dying with Christ and being buried with him, and then we came up on the other side, symbolising that we have also been raised with him. In other words, baptism is a real participation in the great mystery we have celebrated these past three days – the mystery of the death and resurrection of Jesus.

So, as we watch these babies being baptised today, while we will see water poured over their heads, there is much more to understand. We are seeing these children being blessed with the new life of the risen Christ. This is the faith we will all soon profess. Today we are a bit like those disciples on that first Easter morning. We will see more than what is before our eyes. We will see these children baptised, and we will believe that Christ is risen and that he fills these children – and all of us – with life, a life that will never perish.