



The Risen Christ and Mary Magdalene, Church of Saint-Germain-Saint-Protais, Paris

Thinking the unthinkable

Gillian Cooper *reflects on* John 20:1-18

Mary thought he was the gardener. She was, after all, in a garden, and Jesus, she knew, was dead. The empty tomb, the missing body, even the presence of mysterious figures in white, failed to shake that knowledge. She had seen him die and watched as he was buried. Someone must have moved the body; there was no other possible explanation.

Every year we follow Jesus through Holy Week. We face the dreadfulness of Good Friday and the emptiness of Holy Saturday, but we know that Easter Day is coming. So it is helpful that the Gospel readings emphasise the sheer shock of the Easter events. The resurrection was not expected. It was a miracle way beyond anyone's imagining. So impossible was it that even Mary, close as she was to Jesus, could not see him when he stood in front of her. Only when she heard her name spoken could she begin to think the unthinkable. Then she knew that the world had changed, and everyone had to be told.

The resurrection of Jesus is a shocking turning point in the story of the relationship between humanity and God. It tells us with absolute certainty that death has no hold over God, or over us. It shows that in God's universe, love is stronger than hate. In the quiet garden, a man and a woman speak each other's names, and the world is made new. ☀

The Church Fathers

Part 3, Justin Martyr

by Richard Gunning

Richard Gunning continues our look at the early Church Fathers.

Justin Martyr (c. 100-165) was born into a pagan family before converting to Christianity. A professional philosopher and Platonist, he soon became convinced of the moral and spiritual superiority of Christianity. Travelling widely, he spread the word that Christianity was the "true philosophy" and famously

wrote: "Whatever has been uttered aright by any men in any place belongs to us Christians; for, next to God, we worship and love the reason (Word) which is from the unbegotten and ineffable God."

Most of his works are lost, but some survive. His best-known text, *The First Apology*, passionately defends the morality of the Christian life, and provides various ethical and philosophical arguments to convince the Roman emperor to abandon the persecution of the Church.

Justin was martyred, along with some of his students, in Rome. ☀

“Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power to our God.”

Revelation 19:1

Living Lord Jesus, surprise us with your presence in unexpected places and at times of our greatest need; that all our fears and sorrows may be turned to joy, and we may bear witness to your promise of eternal life. Amen.

Finding God on the smallholding

by Jeni Parsons

We'd never had turkeys before so when a local smallholder was selling turkey eggs at the gate of their small farm we bought some. Two of our hens had just gone broody so we divided the eggs between them. Four weeks of waiting but then, in the nest

box, was a chick but upside down, quite cold and still. I picked it up to take it away to bury it, but the warmth of my hand as I walked back to the house changed the story from sadness to hope, as first there was faint movement in the toes and then, under the heat lamp, a return to faint life.

The tiny bird wanted to live and I wanted it to live. It was enough. When the Spirit of God brooded over the waters in Genesis and there was life it was more than enough – "and behold it was good". ☀