



## *Reflection from Joan DeMerchant*

### **Flawed Witnesses and Questionable Evidence**

If you're like me, some days you're not sure about life. Some days, it's hard to believe in promises about life or where God is in all of it. A couple of weeks ago, when Fr Garry invited us to do some faith sharing during the homily, all of us in our little diverse foursome shared doubts we experienced with one another. It was assuring, in a way. I wasn't alone.

So, here we are—on this Sunday of all Sundays, this feast that is the foundation of our faith—confronted again with The Story about life. We hear it for the umpteenth time, giving us the opportunity to believe...at least for this year. Or today. Or not.

The story is brief. Mary Magdalene came to the tomb first—in the dark, saw that the stone enclosing it was gone, and ran to tell Peter and the other apostle (presumably John). They ran back with her and found nothing in the tomb except a pile of burial cloths. And, says the gospel, they believed that Jesus was risen.

Many would doubt this, and who could blame them? These witnesses had their own history—had evolved in their relationship with Jesus. They weren't perfect human beings; and what they saw could be interpreted in different ways. I don't know if you could convince a Grand Jury, on the basis of the witnesses or the evidence.

It's been that way throughout history, including the present. The Church as an institution has been inconsistent as a viable witness to the Resurrection, and even to Jesus himself. Sometimes the witness has been embarrassing, appalling, even sinful. And that includes you and me.

And yet, the inconsistencies and weaknesses seem to me to be encouraging. The witnesses on that first Easter had been through a lot before they got to the point of being able to acknowledge that that empty tomb and pile of cloths signified that Jesus was alive—not dead. They weren't perfect any more than Christians throughout the centuries have been—or than we are. They had their own personal struggles in life and in faith, just as we do.

Nowhere are we told that imperfect faith cancels everything...that God has given up on us just because we struggle. If that had been the case, the Church would be long gone, and so would The Story. It's alive because of people like you and me. We can say, "Maybe," "I'm not sure," or "Yes--for today" and still be loved by God tomorrow. That strikes me as great Easter news....

*Peace,*  
*Joan DeMerchant*