

Easter Day  
St. Paul's/Resurrección, Mount Vernon, WA

March 31, 2024  
Rev. Paul Moore

## Significant Moments

This summer Karisse and I will be joining with two of our kids and grandkids for a vacation in Ecuador. It will be the first time back since we took my parents' ashes to be scattered on Tsachi Indian land nine years ago. It was their request, since they had dedicated their lives to this people, producing for them not only the majority of the Bible, but their first writing system and books, in addition to truly deep and meaningful relationships, and a home for me when I was a small child.

When we arrived with their ashes, we were told the plans had changed. A funeral service was held in the Indian church that resulted from my parents' work. It took two hours. Everybody had to speak. Then we all processed down to the tribal cemetery, where the tribal elders had selected a spot for them. Each of us siblings took turns saying something as we poured ashes into the grave, and then everybody else had to say something, too. It took another two hours. I have never before or afterwards, attended a funeral that took four hours. But it was time well spent. The honor of being given a final resting place with the people they had grown to love, the passion of the words spoken, the testimonies of the impact my parents had on this community, all converge still in my soul to be one of those moments that you know—when you know you've participated in something truly significant.

This Summer we will visit their grave, and tell our sons and grandchildren the story of how they had been honored by the people they loved, how this place has become hallowed ground for us, and how their legacy is now woven into the fabric of our family. I hope it will be a deeply moving experience for them; not like mine, for that is impossible, but for their own sakes. Knowing our family story is such a powerful thing. It has the power to change us, to heal us and to challenge us. In other words, I hope it will become a spiritual story for them.

Our spiritual stories are often punctuated by such moments. Mary Magdalene, weeping at the tomb, heart and soul shattered, laying in pieces among the shards of what is left of her life. Finding insult has been added to injury, for apparently, someone has stolen the body! Then she meets the gardener—or so she thinks, eyes and heart blurred by tears and sorrow, until the "gardener" speaks her name.

“Mary.”

“What?”

“Mary!”

“Tell me where to find him.”

“Mary!!”

Oh, she suddenly realizes that there is no finding to be done. He has found her. He, the great thief of the dead Jesus, stands boldly before her as the risen Christ. She runs to do what we all must do. Knowing she has participated in a truly significant moment, she hurries to share the unlikely, unbelievable experience. "Jesus has risen!"

"What?"

"Yes, Jesus is alive."

"You're hysterical."

"No, I SAW HIM! And what's more, he told me to tell you something."

"Now wait! Jesus entrusts a message for us, his trusted disciples (overlook, please, the cowardice in the garden and during the trial, and the abandonment during the crucifixion, overlook, please, the hiding in the upper room.) "He has entrusted it to a woman!?" Yes, friends, the Magdalene is the first preacher of the Risen Christ, the first Evangelist, the first bearer of the message. She has had the first significant moment in the presence of the Risen One. Now THEY know they have had a truly significant moment because of her message.

What are your significant moments?

A couple went on mission to Honduras back in the late 1990's. They had just been to Cursillo, and were thinking and praying about what their apostolic action should be, what mission God would call them to. When they returned, he said to her, "You know, Bobbi, we're going to launch our own mission in Honduras."

She said, "Don, don't be silly! We can't do that!"

He told her he had been moved to do so in Honduras, and felt just like she did, but then on one of the road trips they drove around a corner and on a Ceiba tree was a single sign with two words on it, "De Colores." And he just knew. He had a significant moment. One thing led to another, and now Honduras Good Works serves the underserved in one of the poorest areas of Honduras with medical care and educational support. This year celebrates 25 years since the mission's first trip.

When did you last share in a truly significant moment? One of those times whose implications seem to go way beyond the moment, pivotal, transformative, luminescent, transcendent, moments when it suddenly dawns on you that it has been granted that the veil that usually covers your eyes has dropped away and there you are, standing in the midst of glory? It's not so much that God showed up, as that it was granted to YOU to show up. Like Mary suddenly recognizing that Jesus had been standing there all along, the ever-present risen Christ has become visible, tangible, audible, obviously present to you, and you wish you could always see, hear and touch like that.

Maybe you can't see that way all the time, but you can think that way—in fact, the world

needs you to do so. It just takes the work of opening your eyes, your ears and your heart. Quiet all the other noise with sighs of gratitude, and then pay attention.

You see, when you live as if God was NOT present, then you do things as if God doesn't matter, as if ultimate things were not, actually, ultimate, that you are your own being, of your own creation, which is a big, fat lie. There is a lot of political talk today about The Big Lie, and all the damage done by denying the truth of what happened last presidential election cycle, such that there is much discussion about social media platforms and their role in spreading The Big Lie. When you live in a lie, you live a false story, and you do the world harm rather than good.

But when you let the presence of the Risen Christ be known to you, your story changes. All the rest of creation slowly comes alive with divinity. You see the web of life in which you live and move and have your being. You wonder at its complexity and grace, and you weep at its rips and tears. The lies become clearly lies, and their damage becomes heartbreaking. You wonder how you ever managed living any other way. You wish with all your heart others could see their own versions of what you see, and you set yourself to working that out in your own way, in your own corner of the world. You live a significant moment that becomes a significant life.

The resurrection of Christ is not just as a piece of the Christian story from another time and place, but is a living, breathing reality in your heart. It grounds your story in the truth of who you are and what the world is. So grounded, you will know what to do, for you will do your good works in God.