



## Entering the Empty Tomb

In the early morning darkness Mary Magdalene saw to her surprise that the huge stone had been rolled away from the tomb. "They have taken the Lord," she concluded, and she ran to tell Peter and John. Racing back, the two men found Jesus' grave open to anyone's entry – and empty.

Thus did the Apostles confront the undying question of Easter: Why was the tomb empty? What happened to the buried body of Jesus Christ? Was the stone rolled away to create an *exit* for the unnamed "them" to take Jesus' body *out* and hide it, or was the boulder removed to make an *entrance* for us to come *in* and find life?

Peter and John did go in, but they found only the burial cloths, not the body, of Jesus. The tomb's emptiness disclosed an unexpected, unexplainable absence. So it did to the women who came to anoint the body, St. Mark tells us. A young man robed in white confirmed their disappointment: "He is not here." But the reason for the absence of his body deepened their amazement: "He has been raised!"

Like the women, like Peter and John, we too must step into the tomb of the Risen One who "emptied himself" on the Cross into absence from us in death. As we enter the Holy Emptiness of the Absent One every year in the Easter liturgy, the mystery of his

unseen Presence enfolds and amazes us as it did the first witnesses.

For "Christ being raised from the dead will never die again," St. Paul says; "death no longer has dominion over Him." Nor will it have dominion over us who "were buried . . . with him by baptism" and who "shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his" if we too "walk in newness of life."

Why was the tomb empty? the Easter question asks. Because the vast emptiness of death could not hold Him in whom "all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell." And from the fullness of the Emptied One we have all received, life in abundance and grace upon grace.