

**Homily offered by The Rev. Charles Rowins at St. Christopher-by-the-Sea,  
Gibson Island, Maryland, Good Friday, April 19, 2019.**

Last year at our Good Friday service, we took some time to think about the tricky situation in which Pontius Pilate found himself. We actually had some sympathy for him because he was reluctant to order the crucifixion, even to the point of giving Jesus an opportunity to save himself. When Jesus declined, Pilate gave in and turned Jesus over to the crowd, and the crucifixion followed.

This year I would like us to focus on the three Marys cited in John's gospel (**John 19:1-30**): Mary, the mother of Jesus; Mary, the wife of Clopas; and Mary, the friend of Jesus. Each plays a very interesting role in the drama of Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Holy Saturday and Easter. And it raises the question of our role. Do we relate to Jesus as parent, as extended family, or as close friend? Or maybe as all three?

Let me argue for all three.

We have a special place in our hearts for **Mary the mother**. From the time of conception, she worried. She worried for herself and her family, and she worried especially for her son. All parents worry about their children. And all try to hide their worry from their children. Jesus was not your run-of-the-mill child. There was something special about him and therefore worrisome about him. Mary bore this worry with grace. Her devotion in the face of events that she couldn't anticipate or control is deeply admired. Her son could have pursued many avenues. He chose the Cross. "Are you absolutely sure, my Son?" "Yes, mother, I am sure. Don't worry about me. I'll be okay." An answer that often adds to a parent's concern. To her credit, Mary stood by her son, to his death. And then on to his resurrection. What a wild ride for him and for her. Is it any wonder that we admire her so much?

**Mary, the wife of Clopas**, who may have been the brother of Joseph, the father of Jesus. If the relationship is accurate, this Mary would have been Aunt Mary to Jesus. Well, here's to all the aunts and uncles in our lives. By in large, aunts and uncles are very special people. They want to help in any way they can. If they do not have children of their own, they are always available. Aunt Mary often accompanied Mary the mother of Jesus. We remember especially her presence

and support at the crucifixion and following the resurrection. Imagine Mary the mother trying to absorb everything she was facing without a close friend. Here's to our close friends, especially those who are family.

And then we have **Mary from the village of Magdala** on the Sea of Galilee. She was a close friend of Jesus. We don't know how they met. We don't really know the nature of their relationship, if any, beyond friendship. We know only that she was there for her friend as he inched closer to inviting the crucifixion. She was a disciple, a follower. Not in the same way as Matthew and the other disciples. Maybe confidante is a more accurate description. She probably heard things from Jesus that Mary and Joseph never heard. And no doubt more than the other disciples heard. She was a listener, a comforter, an advocate. She was a wonderful friend. Here's to our friends and here's to the friendship we extend to others. Imagine your life without a friend. Imagine your child's life without a friend. Imagine not being a friend.

Much of the power, the influence, of the birth, life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus, which we review year after year, comes from the application of these events to our lives. We see ourselves in these characters. We identify with so much of what the Bible relates. It makes us think about what it means for us and what it can mean for others through us.

Is this fascinating and stimulating application to our lives merely an accident of literature? Or is the application intentional, inspired, directed? You and I are here today because we believe in Divine intention. We are meant to value these events, to learn from them, to grow from them, and to share them.

So, if there is a Mary the mother in your life, give her a hug. If there is an Aunt Mary in your life, give her a hug. If there is a confidante Mary in your life, give her a hug. And if there is a child in your life willing to die that others might live, give that child a hug and care for that child even unto death and beyond.

Sunday we celebrate the "beyond." It is the "beyond" that gives today its name: **Good** Friday. But it's not Sunday yet. Today, we stand by our Lord as he pays the ultimate price – for us.

Amen.

