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APRIL 2025 ISSUE

EMPTY TOMB PROJECT

T H E M A G A Z I N E

The Week That Should Change You

The Life Altering Moments of Holy Week



Washing Feet



Easter Vision



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ETP: The Magazine

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What is The Empty Tomb Project?

Empty Tomb Project: The Magazine is a non-profit that exists to bring the reality and power of the empty tomb to as many people as possible. We are convinced that if men and women encounter Jesus as a real living person their lives will be radically changed.

We are an evangelization company that desires to bring relevant cultural and spiritual topics to our readers in an honest and fresh manner. We dive into topics that truly matter to people, themes that are brought up in people's homes as well as in church circles. We desire to bring uniformity in message and an increase in inspiration to Catholics across Long Island (and beyond).

Along with providing the most dynamic content we are committed to producing a product that is beautifully captivating to the eye. To do so we rely on the faithful designers at Startup Catholic so that the content can be amplified by the aesthetics of the magazine.

In order to reach as many people as possible with the critically important message of Christ we rely on donors in order to grow the mission and impact of our magazine. This will allow us to remain free and ensure that anyone who desires to meet Jesus today will have that opportunity. If you feel called to support us, please reach out via email: EmptyTombProject@gmail.com and join us in the mission! All donations are tax deductible.



Washing Feet

By Aidan Weber

If you knew you were going to die tomorrow, what would you do today? I'd probably spend time with family, friends, and in prayer. Maybe I'd go to a Yankee game or play golf. These actions tell a lot about what I value and what I enjoy. Almost no one knows about their death the day before it, but Christ did. He knew He would be scourged, mocked, nailed to a cross, and die. He had one day before His death to spend with Judas, who would betray Him, Peter, who would deny Him, and Thomas, who would doubt Him. He had all the power in the world to do whatever He wanted, so what did He do to these men who would wrong Him? "He poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and dry them with the towel around His waist" (John 13:5).

Christ took a radical turn to humility and service in His final hours. What Christ valued most was setting this example for us. After He completed the washing, He proclaimed, "I have given you a model to follow, so that as I have done for you, you should also do" (JN 13:15). Holy Thursday is often also called "Maundy Thursday." Maundy comes from the Latin word meaning command. Christ commands us to follow His action of washing feet. However, Christ's model isn't as simple as washing others' feet. Christ calls for us to live radically and with radical humility. Imagine looking into the eyes of the man who would soon betray you and commence a series of torture before your eventual death. Our natural reaction is to be angry and seek revenge. Christ got to His knees and washed Judas' feet. It seems impossible for us to replicate this task. It seems impossible because our gaze isn't fixed on heaven, but we are grounded in this world. We marvel at Christ's humility, accept that it's beautiful, and then don't replicate it.



It should be impossible to say that someone created the world, died for us, and can grant us eternal happiness, but not make that being the center of our lives and attention. However, often we struggle to do so and are fixated on temporal worries. This attitude makes emulating Christ impossible. Christ lived radically, and what He did was difficult. Yet, if we had our gaze fixed on heaven, it would fill us with joy to have the ability to imitate anything Christ did because He would be all we care about. We are blessed to live after the incarnation and have the perfect example of how to live. St. Thomas Aquinas gives an example of an illiterate old lady having more knowledge about God after the incarnation than all the great philosophers who dedicated their lives towards understanding God before the incarnation. We must use Christ's example.



Christ's example would've been one of immense humility and love even without any action He took as a human, such as the washing of feet. His most humble action was becoming incarnate. He had all the power in the world and restricted Himself to the human body. Paul, in his letter to the Philippians, states Jesus "emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness; and found in human appearance, he humbled himself, becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross" (Phil 2:7-8). Christ's life started with a humble action, and it didn't even stop to avoid death. Our humility, service, and obedience should never end.

Holy Week reminds us of the great acts Jesus performed for us. Our ideal life, however, wouldn't need a reminder. We wouldn't stop thinking of Christ and His example. We would seek to wash the feet of those who wronged us and do radical things that are in alignment with God, not the world. The lesson from the washing of feet is that Jesus turned societal norms around by remaining humble to shed light on humility as a path for us all to follow. No one can be as great as God, yet even He stooped down to wash another's feet. We have been graciously handed this challenging model to follow. We must have our gaze fixed towards heaven and know that what pleases God is above any fulfillment we can find on earth. Live in radical service and humility because Jesus set service and humility as our example, and whose example would we rather follow?

Aidan Weber is a Long Island resident who is currently studying theology at the University of Notre Dame.



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Parenting at the Foot of the Cross

By Matthew Chicavich

"And you yourself a sword will pierce" (Luke 2:35) are the prophetic words that Simeon spoken to the Blessed Mother as she presented Jesus at the Temple in Jerusalem. Simeon proclaimed Jesus as the "salvation" of humanity and a "light" for all nations. This is the Good News, but Simeon also prophesied the sorrow that would pierce Mary's heart. At the Annunciation, Mary's fiat was not only a "yes" to giving birth to the Messiah, but also an affirmation to all the suffering that comes along with raising a child. In Scripture, three instances of Mary's sorrow are recorded: the prophecy of Simeon, the Holy Family's flight to Egypt, and the loss of Jesus at the temple for three days. We can imagine that Mary encountered other instances of suffering while raising the child Jesus.

Halfway through Lent, my 7 year old, Noah was diagnosed with Legg-Calve-Perthes disease. Up until then, my journey through Lent was somewhat smooth. On top of my everyday spiritual practices, I had attempted to push my limits a bit without overdoing it. I had been listening to the Pray 40 challenge on the Hallow App on the way to work everyday. I was committed to my version of the Lenten Medjugorje fast: only bread and water on Fridays (and a cup of tea with honey). I was even balancing some intentional daily Lenten reading. My word for Lent was "surrender." Lord, help me to surrender everything over to you. I had constructed a nice, tidy plan on how to surrender more deeply. In retrospect, I was very successful at controlling my surrender, which isn't really surrender at all.



To be honest, I didn't anticipate the pain behind Noah's knee to amount to more than a strained muscle from playing soccer. Even as Noah had his knee and hip x-rayed, I wasn't nervous. My son was happily soaking up sparsely allotted screen time by playing Minecraft. I caught up on text messages and tried to do some Lenten reading. When the doctor came back into the examination room, his face was rather grim. He explained that Perthes disease would confine Noah to a wheelchair for over a year. After surgery, he would relearn to walk through physical therapy. The good news was that after two years of struggle, Noah could potentially return to the normal life of a young athlete.

All I heard was two years, wheel chair, surgery. All Noah heard was no sports. Welcome to Lent. Meet surrender.



In my mind, as a parent, the culmination of Mary's suffering has to be Good Friday. What can compare to watching your child being brutally murdered? Twice in Luke 2 we witness Mary's response of deep prayer. First, when the shepherds visit after Jesus' birth: "And Mary kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart" (Luke 2:19). Second, when Jesus is found in the temple after three days: "and his mother kept all these things in her heart" (Luke 2:51). Another translation offers the word "treasured" in exchange for "kept." Here, we witness moments of Mary's preparation for what is to come: Christ's Passion and death, but also his Resurrection.

Mary's role in Salvation History is not passive. Her motherhood did not stop when she gave birth to the Messiah. Standing at the foot of the Cross, Mary united herself to Jesus' sacrifice, offering her maternal heart in union with His. Even amidst Mary's immense sorrow, she remained steadfast in her faith and hope, the same faith and hope that inspired her fiat when the Angel Gabriel visited her over 30 years earlier.

Parents all agree that there is no greater sorrow than witnessing your child suffer. To different degrees, it is inevitable. Physical injuries, emotional pain, and psychological challenges all invite mom and dad to stand at the foot of the Cross. The good news is that we are not alone.

While dying on the Cross, Jesus gave us his mother: "Behold, your mother" (John 19:26). If anyone knows the pain of witnessing their child suffer, it's Mary. More importantly, if anyone knows the joy of Easter, it's our Blessed Mother. Faith and hope are what carry us from Good Friday to Easter Sunday. Let us pray for the graces of faith and hope through the intercession of Jesus' mom. The parent that we all need to learn from.

Matthew Chicavich teaches religion and physics at a Catholic high school on Long Island where he lives with his wife and four children. He has a masters degree in theology and a bachelor's degree in physics.

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Psalm for the Sunrise in the Wilderness

By Peter Vanderberg

1
We choose to bear witness, ashen crosses
blazoned on our brows. This is not easy or comfortable —
this is hunger, this is sacrifice, this is praying in the dark.
Let the spirit lead you into love's wilderness.

Even now says the Lord, *returned to me* —
Each morning cardinals and robins sing their hallelujahs
with the urgency of survival. *Even now*, God says,
return. Listen for his voice, resonant in every song.

When my daughter sees the forsythia's first bright flowers,
she announces "Spring is here!" and we are young again —
surprised by the lengthening of days, watching sparrows
build nests with dead grass, in love with magnolia trees.

But I am the leper, the demoniac, the blind man at the gate.
I say "my soul will be healed" watching to see if He will shake his head.

2
Then it happens while driving my son to practice, "Look!"
he says, "Those clouds—the door of Heaven is opening and Jesus
is about to float down." And behold, it was true—at a red light
on Sunrise Highway—tears in my eyes—God unhardened my heart.

When I try to explain miracles, the stories unravel like half-
remembered dreams. It is not remarkable that forsythia is blooming,
or that birds sing before dawn, or that sun breaks through clouds.
These are common things and I have little faith, but sometimes
it only takes a small silent sound to break through—calling you
to be a new gospel, the prodigal son returned.

After Easter morning, birds will invite us to join the dawn chorus,
stars will train our eyes to gaze deeper into night,
and we will see the wilderness opening to us—blossoming,
lush with signs that call us to be holy—emissaries of divine love.

Author Note: *I believe that every encounter we have with people, nature, beauty, loss—every experience is God trying to communicate with us. This isn't easy of course, but prayer helps. For me, writing—especially poetry—is an act of prayer, of trying to listen to God's call and to create something from that to share with others. This poem came from those ideas as I have been moving through Lent this year.*

Peter Vanderberg teaches at a Catholic high school on Long Island.

*Oh, that today you would hear God's voice:
harden not your hearts*
— Psalm 95



The Sacred Stillness of Holy Saturday

By Mary Molloy

"What is happening? Today there is a great silence over the earth, a great silence, and stillness, a great silence because the King sleeps; the earth was in terror and was still, because God slept in the flesh and raised up those who were sleeping from the ages. God has died in the flesh, and the underworld has trembled.... The Lord goes in to them holding his victorious weapon, his cross. When Adam, the first created man, sees him, he strikes his breast in terror and calls out to all: 'My Lord be with you all.' And Christ in reply says to Adam: 'And with your spirit.' And grasping his hand he raises him up, saying: 'Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light.'" (*An Ancient Homily for Holy Saturday*)

Holy Saturday stands as one of the most hauntingly beautiful days of Holy Week in my experience. There is a profound silence during this day when the normal routines of Church life are suspended. The liturgies of Holy Thursday and Good Friday have left us grieving Jesus' departure, yet within the stillness that follows the Good Friday's liturgy lies a quiet hope of glorious joy to come.

I first felt the full weight of grief and death when I was four years old. My grandfather died suddenly of a heart attack, and his absence, along with the solemnity of his funeral, deeply affected me. There is something about mourning at a tomb that touches the soul's depths—a place where we intuitively recognize that the separation of body and soul contradicts our created purpose. Though I lacked words for this feeling as a child, I remember continuing to experience the mourning it time passed and my grandfather's absence became woven into the fabric of my life. Grief creates its own silence and stillness. No cliché or platitude can fill the emptiness that death unveils.

When I read this Ancient Homily in the Liturgy of the Hours on Holy Saturday, I am always moved by the image of God raising up those who have been sleeping for ages, causing the underworld to tremble. Death and tragedy often feel like overwhelming defeats. In recent years, I've lost close friends and my father suddenly. Two of these friends were among the kindest, most vibrant women I've known in my short life. Two of my dear friends from college were diagnosed with aggressive cancer and died within months. Witnessing their transformation from vibrant health to

profound weakness shook me to my core. When these friends and my father passed away, that familiar feeling of grief and the stillness of the tomb hit me yet again and this time even more deeply.

There exists a different kind of stillness in death when viewed through the reality of the Resurrection. Pope Francis articulated this beautifully during World Youth Day 2023 when speaking about the theological virtue of hope:

"Hope, a light shining in the night In the Christian tradition of the Paschal Triduum, Holy Saturday is the day of hope. Situated between Good Friday and Easter Sunday, it is a kind of no man's land between the despair of the disciples and their joy on Easter morning. It is the place where hope is born ... God does not simply look with compassion on our experiences of death, or call to us from afar; he enters into our moments of hell like a light that shines in the darkness and overcomes it."

What moves me most deeply about God's love is His willingness to descend into our despair. He doesn't remain distant or indifferent. Rather, compelled by profound love and compassion, He enters the depths of hell itself to raise humanity to the glory for which we were created—the glory of eternal beatitude and face-to-face relationship with God. Death's sting is diminished because Christ has conquered its darkness and transformed it into a passage to glory through His sacrifice on the Cross. The darkness of Good Friday gives birth to Easter Sunday's joy, with Holy Saturday as the sacred space of waiting in silence for the glory of Resurrection to be revealed.

For those with hope with certain faith, we know that beyond the dark stillness of Holy Saturday awaits the glorious celebration of Easter morning. This is the reality we must integrate into our daily lives. Even the most brutal injustice, painful tragedy, or devastating loss will ultimately pass away as the victorious Christ becomes clear to us who now see only dimly in the tomb's dark stillness.

The earth trembles with both fear and longing for the fullness of the joy we were created to experience. When my friends died of cancer, overwhelming sadness settled deeply within me until I recalled our conversations about their hope of seeing Jesus face to face and experiencing complete restoration. They knew how to live in Holy Saturday's hope, while I, fixed only on the tomb's dark walls rather than looking upward in hope, remained trapped in Good Friday's misery.

The tomb calls us to both grieve and surrender control. For me, the reality of death—especially its often unfair timing—strikes my heart with tremendous force. Yet Jesus embraced this profound suffering not merely to accompany us but to raise us from it. We are called to rise from death into Light, who is Love Himself. If this Holy Week finds you in darkness—whether from grief, injustice, or hopelessness—know that Christ is within you, raising you through His Sacred Heart, which He gives to us completely in the sacred stillness of the sacraments.

Mary Molloy teaches Religion at a Catholic high school on Long Island. She received her BA & MA in Catechetics and Theology from Franciscan University of Steubenville. She has spent the last 15 years in ministry both international and domestically. Her favorite thing is to serve the poor and spend quality time with her loved ones.

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Thomas Griffin

Foreword by Fr. Mark-Mary Ames, CFR

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BOOK DESCRIPTION

Our culture is broken. The remedy is not a program or a worldwide initiative. The answer is found in personal renewal.

The Life Altering Emptiness of the Tomb

By Thomas Griffin

Easter morning is meant to radically alter our worldview.

Christ has predicted what would happen. He has been betrayed and deserted. He has been brutally whipped - his tendons and flesh, made to hang from his corpse. The wood and splinters of the cross beams were morphed to his bloodied body. He couldn't catch his breath as he slowly suffocated to death for three hours.

Then his body was taken down and handed to his mother. He was wrapped in swaddling clothes like he was at Bethlehem and placed in a grave with a large rock at its entrance. The one who healed countless wounds and ailments, the one who brought the dead to life has been made lifeless.

Then, on that Easter morning, as the sun rose on the blood stained path of Good Friday - a light shone from that tomb. The rock had been moved and no body was found. The swaddling clothes remained behind - Jesus had risen. His appearances to his friends left them to simply fall and worship. Death, sin and evil had been conquered.

Consider what it would have been like to be Mary Magdalene or one of the Twelve who saw the risen Jesus that day. Their disbelief led to amazement and joy.

Have we ever truly reflected on what this would have been like?

This Easter Sunday, and for the week following it, let us be moved to enter into silent prayer and picture that empty tomb. Let us picture what it would be like to be there, watching Jesus appear to Mary Magdalene, the Twelve, Peter on the shore, and the disciples on the Road to Emmaus. Then, let us consider how the fact of the resurrection is challenging us to trust more in Christ.

Does anxiety rule you? Do you or a loved one have an illness that is crippling your faith? Do finances or fears about your children control you and bring you down? Whatever it is that strips you of trust in God, allow Him to raise it up. Because Jesus rose from the dead two thousand years ago, but he is truly alive today - desperately desiring to be a bigger part of your life.

This Easter, let him in. He is standing at the empty tomb, calling your name - begging you to allow him to bring you to new life.

Thomas Griffin is the chairperson of the Religion Department at a Catholic High School on Long Island where he lives with his wife and three children. He is the founder and editor-in-chief of Empty Tomb Project: The Magazine. He is the author of Let Us Begin: Saint Francis's Way of Becoming Like Christ and Renewing the World.

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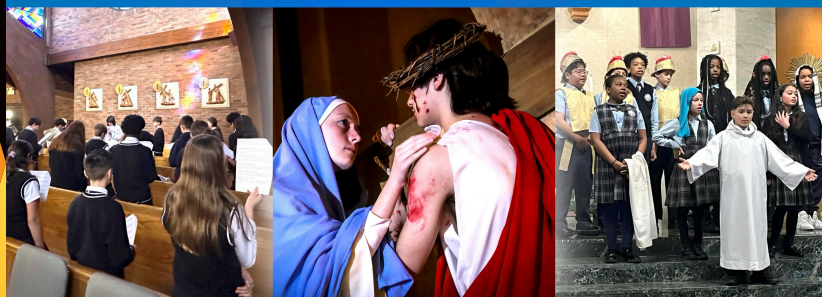
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