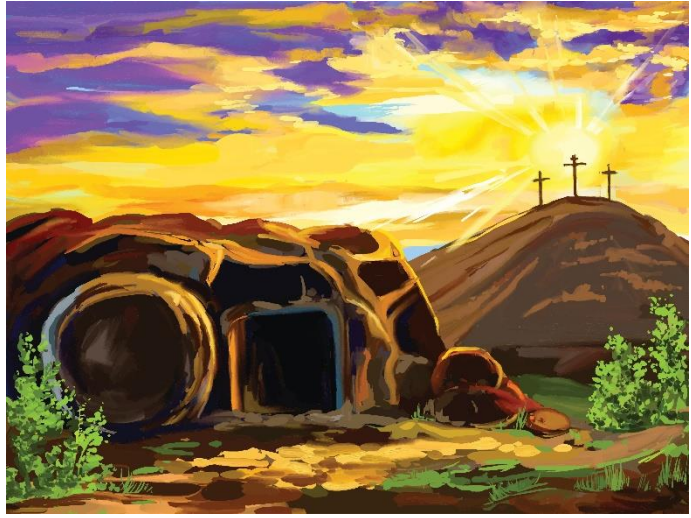


## Easter 2018 Reflection: Have You Been to the Garden?

**By Sister Wanda Smith**

For the past weeks of Lent we have reflected on the Seven Last Words of Jesus. Our hearts have been moved by the passion of Christ and his instructions to us as he was dying. We walked with him through the retelling, and we sat by the empty tomb during Holy Week. What a tragic end to the story of this remarkable person.



But wait, the story doesn't end there! We have been invited to go to the garden. Maybe we go like the women who went there early that Easter Sunday morning expecting to find the tomb covered, expecting to find it the way we left it before the Sabbath. But that isn't how our God works. That is not the end of the story.

Let turn our attention to the first word of the Risen Christ.

First, picture the scene ...

The women, including Mary Magdalene, reported that the stone had been rolled away and the tomb was empty when they went to the garden.

Peter and John race to the tomb in the garden and find it as the women said.

Can you feel the loss, the puzzlement, the wonder, the fear and maybe even a slight glimmer of hope as they leave the garden?

But you stay there with Mary, who has returned. She stayed at the cross and now she stays in the garden.

Do your eyes fill with tears as Mary weeps for the one she loved and in whom she had placed her hope for a better world?

She hears a voice that she doesn't recognize ask her the question: "Woman, why are you weeping? Who are you looking for?" Startled, she turns to see a strange man, a gardener. Turn with her.

She asks where they have taken the body. It is when he responds to her question that she hears the voice of Jesus. Jesus simply says her name—the name of his friend, his companion, his supporter, his follower, his disciple. "Mary."

The first recognized word of the Risen Christ was her name.

I believe he spoke her name with so much tenderness, love and joy that it left no doubt in her mind and heart that it was Jesus. How could she do anything but "go and tell the good news!"

The first Word of our Risen Christ is your name. Do you hear it? Have you been to the garden? Have you heard your name on the lips of Jesus? And have you been able to respond as Mary did?

All of us are called by our baptism to be women and men of Mercy. We all are called to make Mercy real in our world by living as women and men who have heard the voice of Jesus call our name.

So let the Alleluias ring out this Easter season, for the one who loves us is alive in our midst and continues to call our name each day. What will be our response?