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## Running With The Lord

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# THE LITURGICAL SINGER

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## SINGING THE SEASONS

### RUNNING WITH THE LORD

R. GABRIEL PIVARNIK, OP

**S**he only thought of one possible reaction to the dilemma that was before her: Run. Filled perhaps with fear and doubt, she found her small tired feet leaping with every pounding of her heart. Time was of the essence. And although she had barely slept over the last three days, she had to hurry before something else happened.

Such was the reaction of Mary Magdalene in the Gospel of John on Easter Sunday (John 20:1–9). At the sight of the empty tomb, she runs. She runs to tell Peter and the other disciples that Jesus has been taken from the tomb. She runs because she does not understand; she runs because she sees only what she has lost. If that were the end of the Easter story, then she would have no reason to hope, no reason for joy, no reason for proclaiming and singing about the God who loves her. But that is not the end of Mary's story. Almost immediately after that passage in John's Gospel, we see that Mary has returned to the scene of her torment. Broken, bewildered, and confused, she seeks the one person who dared to love her, the Christ, to whom she had dedicated her life. Thinking that she has come across the gardener, Mary Magdalene inadvertently encounters the Lord, who then names her to the very core of her being: "Mary!" And she responds: "Rabboni!" The exchange is so brief and yet so meaningful. And instead of allowing her to cling to all that she remembers about him, instead of basking in the reunion of hearts and souls that have known one another, he gives her a simple command: Run.

*But as her feet carried her closer and closer to her destination, any passerby would have noticed that the emotion that drove her was not fear but necessity. She*

## IN THIS ISSUE . . .

We explore the theme "Easter joy—it's not all about *me*!" Sometimes, it seems, singers do not have the best intentions at heart as they go about their ministry. Have you, for instance, ever kept count of how many times you got to cantor the *big* Mass, complained if you didn't get a particular solo, or grouched about who you were sitting next to in choir?

In this issue we look at some of these issues and try to put them in perspective. Father Gabriel Pivarnik, OP, does a beautiful job of setting the tone in his article, "Running with the Lord" (page one). Lou Valenzi then relates these issues to choir directors and singers in "Choir: Be Team Players and Put the Egos Aside" (page three). And Lori True looks at the importance of the whole assembly in "It's Not about Me; It's about We" (page four).

Our prayer this month is from the book *Prayers for the Servants of God* by Edward Hays. It is a "Prayer of Preparation for a Cantor or Choir Member." Many parishes keep this prayer inside their cantor book, and I hope that it will give you some insight into our ministry.

But that's not all: Be sure to read every article and truly pray about how you can "encourage one another and build each other up" (1Thessalonians 5:11). May you and your families truly experience the joy of this Easter Season! Once you do experience it, make sure you share it with others!

Mary Lynn Pleczkowski  
Editor

*was moving now not out of a need to feel secure or consoled but out of an overabundance of joy that manifested itself within her as purpose and direction in her own life. Run. The love that she had clung to in the hours of her despair now began to lift her very feet from the ground. Run. And do not stop until the message has been delivered.*

It is Mary Magdalene who takes up the song of all creation when she proclaims to the disciples: "I have seen





Georges de la Tour, *Magdalen of the Night Light*, oil on canvas, 1630–1635. Courtesy of the Musée de Louvre, Paris.

the Lord!” (John 20:18). That song echoes through the centuries to the present age as we pick up the mantle of her commission and sing about the God who has loved us, who has restored us in hope, who has risen in the light of Easter joy. What else could it mean for those of us who have been gifted with the awe-inspiring challenge to sing of the Easter resurrection? Called to proclaim our own encounter with the risen Lord, we forget our anxieties and preoccupations and sing about the God who has touched us.

But, all too often, many of us follow Mary’s first reaction to the empty tomb—filled with self-doubt and fear, insecurity and the need for adulation, we think that the music we sing is about us, about our talent, about some wonderful and melodious outpouring of an inner brilliance that has its origin in our vocal cords. For singers of the Word, for those who break open the Paschal Mystery for others, that cannot be our reaction or our mindset.

Instead, we must *run*. Completely abandoning our own agendas and schemes, we must allow the Spirit to propel and fill our song. We must *run* to proclaim with Easter joy not only that “he is risen!” but also that “we have seen

the Lord.” Like Mary Magdalene, we cling not to what we have known or what makes us feel secure, but we *run* to proclaim and sing to others. Easter forces us out of ourselves to proclaim the Gospel of love. Mary Magdalene looks past herself to the message that has been entrusted to her. The love that now fills her is not simply love for the Christ to whom she was told not to cling but love for those to whom she brings the message of salvation. When she arrives and sees the disciples again, she recounts everything that the Lord has said to her. The abundance of joy that was hers at seeing the Lord is now spilling over—it must be shared, it must be proclaimed. The mission she now enjoys has nothing to do with her and everything to do with the message: “I have seen the Lord.”

When we sing and lead our assemblies during this Easter Season, are we singing “ourselves” or the message that has been entrusted to us? Through our ministries, and especially in the liturgical action, we are called to further the mystery that is being celebrated. The proclamation of the Word in voice and in song is meant to lead us to the Eucharistic table. Like the road to Emmaus, our sung proclamation has a direction and an ending point: It points us to the revelation of Jesus in the breaking of the bread. I cannot help but think that in this regard we are like John the Baptist in his recognition of the Messiah: He must increase, I must decrease. We bracket our egos, not in false humility, but so that Christ may increase in us and in the people that we serve. Then—and perhaps only then—will we realize that Mary Magdalene *ran* not of her own accord, but it was the Spirit which ran through her and in her.

*She thought of only one possible reaction to the manifestation before her. Run. Filled with the Spirit of hope, she allowed the breath of life to lift her song on high. Time was of the essence. It must be proclaimed: He is Risen! He is Risen! Alleluia! Alleluia!* ☸

**Father of unending light, with a glance  
you lit a fire of love in the Magdalen  
and melted the icy coldness of her heart.**

**Unafraid, she stood by the cross;  
anxious of soul, she waited by your tomb  
without fear of cruel soldiers,  
for love casts out all fear.**

**Christ, true love, wash us clean of sin,  
fill our hearts with grace,  
and grant us heaven’s reward.**

*From Pater superni luminis, the hymn for vespers on the feast of Mary Magdalen, composed by St. Robert Bellarmine (1541–1621). Translation from A Pastoral Musician’s Book of Days, compiled by Gordon E. Truitt (Silver Spring, Maryland: NPM Publications, 2000).*