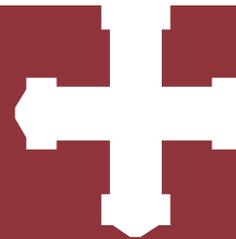


THE MYRRAM BEARING WOMEN
AT THE TOMB



Icon: Myrrh-Bearing Women

Resource 2.26



The Myrrh Bearing Women, egg tempera on wood, 2011. A Planned Giving Icon

This icon was written to honor those who worked to help in New Orleans during the post-Katrina disaster. It is intentionally without gold leaf because the scene traditionally takes place in the darkness of the Resurrection morning. We often use this icon to consider stewardship, and especially planned giving, because the women bring costly gifts to Jesus, only to be told by the angels that he is not there. He is Risen! In other words, the gifts they brought to Christ's body now need to be brought to the new Body of Christ – his church—over in the towns and villages where people dwell—not in this tomb.

Notice that the energy and movement of the icon, its mountains and the teal wings of the angel, are all leaning off to the left. That is because, in iconography, the energy of an icon always surrounds Jesus. So, if you look at an icon in which Jesus is present, such as the Anastasis Icon of the Resurrection (the other primary Easter Icon) you will see the mountains wrap over Jesus—to show where Jesus is and that Jesus is the center of the image. However, in the Myrrh Bearing Women Icon, the wings and mountains point up and off to the left, to indicate that Jesus is away—that the body of Christ is now the church, and it is to the church that these valuable post-death gifts are to be brought. The spices and Myrrh (which was, in the first century, equal in value to gold by weight) were costly and would represent a year's salary to a wealthy person at that time or a life-time gift of an average person of the first century.

Matthew 28:1-10

After the sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. ²And suddenly there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord, descending from heaven, came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. ³His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. ⁴For fear of him the guards shook and became like dead men. ⁵But the angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid; I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. ⁶He is not here; for he has been raised, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. ⁷Then go quickly and tell his disciples, 'He has been raised from the dead, and indeed he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him.' This is my message for you." ⁸So they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. ⁹Suddenly Jesus met them and said, "Greetings!" And they came to him, took hold of his feet, and worshiped him. ¹⁰Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me."

Prayer

Father of all life, giver of all gifts and bringer of both life and death; give us an awareness of our brief time on this planet. Help us hold gently the humility of our mortality. When we fear death and the need to plan for it, be present to us in compassion. When we clutch our money and possessions, remind us, gentle Lord, that you give and that you take away. As we help others to give their biggest gift, through planned giving to the church, help us to be midwives to the great act of generosity made possible in a planned gift. May we be great ancestors to the future of the church by our planned giving. *Amen.*