

This is the beginning of the longer ending to Mark's gospel, often seen as an addition to its true ending to ameliorate it in some way. In the shorter ending, the women run away from the tomb 'frightened out of their wits', in one translation, and so it seems others have added what they thought were more suitable endings, but these in turn are very unsatisfactory. Indeed, Marie Noonan Sabin, writing in the *Collegeville Biblical Commentary*, is scathing in her appraisal of the longer ending and of the weak translation of the original ending which has perhaps brought it about. In her understanding, the women flee from the tomb not 'frightened out of their wits' and silent though fear, but

trembling and ecstasy possessed them, and they said nothing to anyone because they were filled with awe.

These are the hallmarks, not of a negative, but a very positive experience of transformation: the resurrection has turned their world upside down. So their fear is not the fear of disbelief which, in turn, compounds the disbelief of others, but the excess of an experience which they find impossible to convey to others. Rather than see the longer ending in a negative light, one could see its emphasis on the difficulty of belief as a true reflection on what happened, and still happens, to people in the first throes of believing in Jesus as risen. In short, it demands an experience which we might characterise as personal, grace-filled and almost entirely unexpected. If the first witnesses had difficulty with expressing an experience which is essentially ineffable we shouldn't be too surprised, perhaps, that all subsequent writers and translators have had difficulty too.

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