

In an Easter sermon from 2003, Rowan Williams describes this encounter *as one of the most devastatingly moving moments of the whole Bible*. And it is - there, at the heart of our own Easter Vigil, when Mother Prioress sings the words to us, and especially at the naming of Jesus as 'Rabboni' – a caritative expressing the heart's desire:

Scarcely had I passed them than I found him whom my heart loves.

This is followed almost immediately by Jesus' words to her. *Do not cling to me* or *Do not touch me*. What a let down! But needed, because Jesus is telling her of an even greater love that awaits them both. Physical contact can only take us so far, just as the sacramentality of the eucharist can only take us so far. Incarnation, then, has a purpose, though it's not ultimately further incarnation, but rather a re-setting of creation in an everlasting mode; a placing of it within its true spiritual context as a means of returning to God or, as Rowan Williams goes on to say,

Jesus goes to the Father and from his place next to the Father's heart sends out the gift of the Spirit of Truth that allows us a share in his own closeness to the Father.

We are to be 'a new creation' and this inevitably involves letting go of the old one. Rowan Williams interprets this in terms of letting go of all the self-justifying truths we hold on to in justifying ourselves to others. They're no longer needed, as Christ is the one who now justifies us, puts us right before God, and puts us right in ourselves, if not before others. What we are being introduced to is our own intrinsic value as human beings and the intrinsic value of everyone and everything else. This is a world made good, constituted by love, re-made in God's image. No wonder she finds herself running to the other disciples to tell them this good news. This re-adjustment, of course, will not be without anxiety or 'reverse culture shock' as we are finding out with Covid-19.

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