

There's a whole world of meaning in this beautiful scene: the shock of recognition, the gift of love, that moment of conversion that can change us all. Mary seeks the body of her beloved and is the first to find him alive, or just as well to be found by him and given life, for we are the dead ones in the scene. – without hope, without meaning, without faith, but not without love. This is the search we must never give up on and why the passage from the Song of Songs is appropriate. We are made for love, to know and be known by others. In this sense Jesus crystallises or epitomises this need and imagine the very joy he too finds in this encounter, the delight he takes in playing a little game with Mary. She reveals the depth of her love in the brief misunderstanding, so typical of John's gospel, and Jesus only has to speak her name for all to be made clear – he could have done that immediately but addresses her as 'woman' first. And how we delight in teasing one another when in love, when love, that is, is secure enough to allow such freedom. So there's an element of play in this most serious of encounters. It's as well to remember this when we get too serious in our faith. We need to leave room for God to have the last laugh, think of Abraham and Sarah, Jesus and Lazarus – that delicious delay of three days, that resurrection that comes when we are prepared to wait, to have faith, to have hope, to love when all seems lost. All this too as gift in the Lord's keeping.

Br John Mayhead
Monastery of Christ Our Saviour