

Every Easter morning, my two nieces and nephew wake up early in the morning before the sun rises and they begin their scavenger hunt. I'm sure that's what they're doing this morning. Every Easter. The scavenger hunt begins. There will be a clue, a riddle of some kind that tells each of the kids where to go searching next. So, they'll go looking all over the house for the next clue, the next clue that will hopefully lead to the prize – their Easter basket. They'll go looking in the attic. In the dishwasher. Behind the television. They'll go looking in the garage for the next clue. In the mailbox. And even in someone's old shoe. They find their clue, and then they try to figure out where to go next, wherever the next clue sends them. Clue after clue. The goal is to find their Easter basket. That marks the end of their scavenger hunt.

They always find their basket – eventually. But sometimes they run into some “dead ends” along the way. They'll sometimes get stuck on a clue and it becomes difficult to figure out where to go next. They'll go looking in the place they think the clue is leading them only to find they had figured wrong. Dead end. And that's when things become a little frustrating. It's early in the morning. They're sleep-deprived. And they seem to have hit a dead end. That can cause some frustration. Once they hit a dead end, my nieces and nephew will do the only thing that they can do – they turn around to do some more searching. And sometimes they need a little help along the way so they can find what they're looking for.

Dead ends. This whole day is about dead ends. Early in the morning, probably sleep-deprived from all of the struggle the last couple of days, Mary Magdalene and another Mary go to Jesus' tomb. They follow the trail that dead ends into Jesus' tomb. They're met with an empty tomb, a hollow crypt. Instead of joy, these two Marys become frustrated, though. They've hit a dead end. They don't know who took Jesus' body and where they would have laid him. They just want to anoint Jesus' body with the proper burial spices. They figure someone must have stolen his body. It's the only explanation they can come up with in their minds. It's the only explanation to this riddle that they can imagine. Where do they go from here?

Well, a little help comes along. An angel tells these two Marys that there's no reason for frustration. He tells them to turn around and go searching for Jesus in Galilee. Go and tell the disciples the good news. He is risen.

These two Marys aren't the only ones who seem to have a hit a dead end, though. For the disciples, it really is the end for them. And it is deadly. They have been associating with a criminal, a man guilty of treason – this king of the Jews. People are looking for them. These disciples go into hiding, trying to avoid the same fate as their leader. They're afraid of what is about to happen to them once they are seen. They're confused. They cannot trust anyone. It's a dead end. Where do they go from here? The Marys have hit a dead end. The disciples have hit a dead end. Jesus' death marks a lot of dead ends.

We run into some dead ends along the journey of life and faith quite a bit, too. There are times when we hit a dead end in a relationship – a dead end with a loved one, a

friend, a relative. No matter what we do, we just can't seem to get through. And that can get frustrating. Where do we go from there?

There are times when we hit a dead end with our health or maybe a loved one's health, someone we care deeply about isn't getting any better. Instead of hearing some much needed good news from a doctor, maybe we receive some frustrating news. Maybe we even try everything we can imagine to stay in good health only to find that it doesn't seem to be working. More frustration. More dead ends. Where in the world do we go from there?

There are times when we hit dead ends with our job. Dead ends with our marriage. Dead ends with our kids. Dead ends with our parents. Dead ends in our career. Dead ends with school. It may sometimes seem as though wherever we turn, it just leads to another dead end. And we may be left asking ourselves, "Where is Jesus?" "What has happened to him?" "He was supposed to be here." "Show us where to go from here."

Maybe we're looking for clues as to where to go on this scavenger hunt in life and faith. Maybe the clues just don't seem to be adding up, making much sense. The scavenger hunt in life and faith has maybe lost its fun – it's not as exciting as it once was. It's not as joyful as it once was. Maybe we even just gave up looking a long time ago. Maybe we just became skeptical or cynical or bitter in our faith.

What do we do at that point? What do we do after we find ourselves running into dead ends, when we're stuck? When we're trapped? When we're frustrated? When we have no idea where to turn to next? What do we do?

If you're in a place where you're feeling as though you've hit a dead end, not sure where to go exactly, not sure where to turn, not sure how it is that maybe you've gotten yourself into this bind that maybe you're in, maybe try listening to this angel's words again – they're meant for you as much as they were meant for these two Mary's who were searching. "Do not be afraid... I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here." (He's not here at this dead end!) "For he has been raised. This is my message for you."

In other words, don't give up the search for Christ after hitting a dead end. The search has only begun at that point. Our reading tells us that as soon Jesus appears to the disciples, the disciples grab onto Jesus' feet, and they begin worshipping him. They were stuck. They were trapped. They were running, literally, for their lives. And the dead end they couldn't see through at all suddenly disappears when Jesus appears in front of them. They grab on to his feet. And they worship him.

In midst of dead ends in life, grab onto Jesus' feet. If you're in a dead end in a relationship, with a loved one, grab onto Jesus' feet. See where he takes ya. If you've hit a dead end with your health, with your job, with school, grab onto his feet. See what good news he has to share with you. If you've hit a dead end, maybe even in your walk of faith, you're just not going anywhere in your love for God – you're stuck – grab onto his feet and worship him. Worship him as if you knew you were a goner, and now, all you have is this new life in front of you. Grab onto his feet in this scavenger hunt in life. His feet, wherever he goes, never leads to any dead ends... his feet lead to the end of death. Thanks be to God! Amen.