Mary Magdalene stayed outside the tomb weeping. Tears of sorrow are a natural part of the grieving process. We know that Jesus shed tears at the death of Lazarus. However, death amidst a worldwide pandemic is anything but natural. As worldwide numbers of infections rise swiftly towards 2 million, the number of deaths is also shockingly high at 120,000.

In addition to her natural grief at the death of Jesus, Mary sheds additional tears because she has not yet come to believe in the resurrection. All she knows at the start of today’s Gospel is that Jesus is dead and apparently missing from the grave. As mass graves are being dug on New York City’s Hart Island, workers in hazmat outfits are stacking wooden coffins in deep trenches. Although every effort is being made to document where people are temporarily buried, it is easy to imagine that one or more family members may feel exactly like Mary of Magdala, “They have taken my loved one and I don’t know where they have laid him.”

“Woman, why are you weeping?” (Jn 20:15) Jesus asks Mary directly and still she does not yet understand. In our grief, we may take more time to understand. Not until Jesus calls Mary by name, does she recognize him. And still, she wants to hold on and not let go. Perhaps we may be like this as well. We want to hold on to a loved one. We don’t want to let go. Mary Magdalene had the help of Jesus. She let go of her grief and then shared the good news with the disciples.

Everyone has a responsibility to help others cope with loss and death. Helping to comfort those who mourn is a corporal work of mercy. This can take many forms:

- Certainly, in our villages we are thankful for the strong men who brave weather all year round to help dig graves no matter how frozen the ground.
- Families appreciate a meal that is prepared and brought over by a friend. In our grief, we may lack an appetite. But when hunger does come it is so nice to be able to reach across the table for a piece of bread or into the cooler for a prepared meal that only needs a little heating.
- Without saying a word, our physical presence can be very comforting and reassuring. Amidst social distancing, this may be especially painful at the moment. But the grieving process continues long after a loved one dies. Lending an ear that is ready to listen long past the day of death can be of great help.
- We, the living, are called to pray for the dead. When we die, we are not perfect like Jesus. We need be purified to see God in all of His glory “All who die in God's grace and friendship, but still imperfectly purified, are indeed assured of their eternal salvation; but after death they undergo purification, so as to achieve the holiness necessary to enter the joy of heaven” (Catechism of the Catholic Church1030). In praying for the dead, we follow the tradition first mentioned in Sacred Scripture: “Therefore [Judas Maccabeus] made atonement for the dead, that they might be delivered from their sin” (12:46).
- On Good Friday, we began praying a Novena that stretches the 9 days until Divine Mercy Sunday. In her Diary, St Faustina wrote:
  “At three o’clock, beg for My mercy, especially for sinners, and immerse yourself, even for a short moment, in contemplation of My Passion, particularly when I was left forsaken at the moment of death. That is the hour of great mercy for the whole world. I shall allow you to enter into the depths of My mortal sorrow. At this hour, I shall not refuse anything that a soul may ask of Me, for the sake of my Passion...” (1320).

We believe the ties that connect us here on earth do not unravel with death. When we pray the Creed, a payer of our core beliefs, we “look forward to the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come.” And still we weep. In mourning for the dead, we weep with tears of sorrow. In contemplating God's mercy and eternal life, in time, we learn to weep with tears of joy.