

Hope was always there

By [Nancy Janisch](#)

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There's a window at my church that shows Mary weeping at the tomb with Jesus standing behind her.

There was a time when I sat where I could see this window every single Sunday. It is a tall window and I didn't even look at all of it. I only looked at the lowest part of the window, where Mary sits weeping. All I saw was Mary. Sad, bereft, hopeless.

For a long time I sat with Mary. For a long time I needed to sit with Mary. Mary and I sat together each Sunday for months. Mary in the window. Me in a pew. Sad, weeping, hopeless.

Slowly things got better. I took tiny, little steps. One day I could smile—a little. And gradually I could smile a little more and a little more. My sadness lifted, hope returned. I didn't need to sit with Mary every week. I sat in other parts of the sanctuary. Then one Sunday I sat again with Mary. I looked at Mary and saw the rest of the window. I saw what I couldn't see before—hope.

Hope standing right behind her. Hope waiting for Mary to lift her head a tiny bit. Hope waiting for her to just to take a breath. Hope was there all along. With her, waiting for her. Not leaving her in her time of distress. Hope patient, gentle, waiting. Waiting for Mary to be ready to see Jesus again.

I imagine, Mary finally lifts her head, just a bit and sees someone out of the corner of her eye. Or perhaps she has that feeling you get when someone is behind you. But finally she is able to lift out of her grief just enough to realize she is not alone. Of course Mary doesn't see clearly at first. She thinks Jesus is a gardener. Her grief still clouds her eyes. She has turned, shifted, but her sorrow still clings. Sorrow is still the veil through which she sees the world. Until she reaches out.

She is mistaken, of course. Mistaken about who she is speaking to. Mistaken about what has happened. Mistaken in thinking hope is gone. But that mistake doesn't matter. Mary speaks, mistakenly yes, but she speaks. Once she speaks, once she

reaches out, she can hear Hope speak. She can hear Hope reply. And what Jesus says is her name, "Mary."

As I looked at that window. I thought back over the previous time when hope seemed far away from me. And I realized that, like Mary, hope was there with me all the time. Hope was present in worship, in the hymns and prayers and sacraments. Hope was there in my friends who prayed for me and listened to me. Friends who waited by my side until I could life up my head, just a little. Hope was present in so many ways.

It is interesting what we see and what we don't see. Jesus was in the window the whole time. But I couldn't take my focus off Mary. Mary was what I looked at until I was able to see a little hope. And then, I realized, he was there the whole time.

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