

Easter

In Frances Burnett's *The Secret Garden* a boy names Colin has lived as an invalid at Misselthwaite Manor. His mother had died at his birth; his father unable to bear the reminders of her, had closed her garden and gone abroad. His only other relative was a cousin named Mary (an orphan) who had recently arrived to live at the Manor. It was she who found and reopened the closed garden that spring, for the first time in ten years, and with a shepherd boy, Dickon, cultivated it back to its original beauty. She didn't know Colin existed until she heard his crying one day. She found him, pale and bedridden, and remarked, "What a strange house. Rooms are locked up and the gardens are locked up – and you! Have you been locked up?"

Apparently his father's grief made Colin feel guilty over his mother's death, which translated into physical ailments and a conviction that he himself was soon to die. Well, Mary and Dickon knew that all Colin needed was exposure to the wonders of the secret garden. So they took him in his wheelchair to the garden gate, and related to him how they themselves first found the garden, guided by a robin. Dickon pushed the boy into the garden and with a gasp of delight covered his eyes with his hands until they were inside, only then to take them away and look round and round as Dickon and Mary had once done. "Everywhere were splashes of gold and purple and white and fluttering of wings and faint sweet pipes and humming and scents... And the sun fell warm upon his face. And Colin stood up and cried out "I shall get well and I shall live forever and ever."

Easter is a time for us to experience what Colin did. Some, like Colin, may feel locked away from the beauty of life for one reason or another. By his death and resurrection Christ offers each of us a chance to walk into the garden of a new life, free from whatever has kept us inside ourselves in the past. There was a woman in Jesus' day named Mary, who, having experienced a

similar garden, rushed to tell others "I have seen the Lord." May we experience the Risen Lord today.