

LIVING THE GOSPEL
EASTER SUNDAY
Apr 4, 2010



LIVING THE GOSPEL
EASTER SUNDAY
Apr 4, 2010



Theme: "He saw and believed."

Gathering Prayer

All: God our Father, by raising Christ your Son you conquered the power of death and opened for us the way to eternal life. Let our celebration today raise us up and renew our lives by the Spirit that is within us. Grant this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God for ever and ever. **Amen.**

Exploring the Word

Gospel Reading: John 20:1-9

¹ Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb. ² So she ran, and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him." ³ Peter then came out with the other disciple, and they went toward the tomb. ⁴ They both ran, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first; ⁵ and stooping to look in, he saw the linen cloths lying there, but he did not go in. ⁶ Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb; he saw the linen cloths lying, ⁷ and the napkin, which had been on his head, not lying with the linen cloths but rolled up in a place by itself. ⁸ Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; ⁹ for as yet they did not know the scripture, that he must rise from the dead.

Gospel Notes

Saturday 10am - 12pm at Church of The Holy Cross (room #03-06)

Contacts:

George Chee	georgejc@gmail.com
Anthony Lim	am32lim@singnet.com.sg
Ellic Hiu	etshiu@gmail.com

The Navarre Bible – Commentaries;
Living Liturgy – Liturgical Ministry, The Liturgical Press;
Emmaus Journey – www.emmausjourney.org

1-2. All the four Gospels reports the first testimonies of the holy women and the disciples regarding Christ's glorious resurrection, beginning with the fact of the empty tomb (cf. Mt 28: 1-5; Mk 16:1ff; Lk 24:1-12) and then telling of the various appearances of the risen Jesus.

Mary Magdalene was one of the women who provided for our Lord during his journeys (Lk 8: 1-3); along with the Virgin Mary she bravely stayed with him right up to his final moments (Jn 19:25), and she saw where his body was laid (Lk 23:55). Now, after the obligatory Sabbath rest, she goes to visit the tomb. The Gospel points out that she went "early, when it was still dark": her love and veneration led her to go without delay, to be with our Lord's body.

4. The Fourth Gospel makes it clear that, although the women, and specifically Mary Magdalene, were the first to reach the tomb, the Apostles were the first to enter it and see the evidence that Christ had risen (the empty tomb, the linen clothes "lying" and the napkin in a place by itself). Bearing witness to this will be an essential factor in the mission, which Christ will entrust to them: "You shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem ... and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8; cf. Acts 2:32).

John, who reached the tomb first (perhaps he was younger), did not go in, out of deference to Peter. This is an indication that Peter was already regarded as leader of the Apostles.

5-7. The words the evangelist uses to describe what Peter and he saw in the empty tomb convey with vivid realism the impression it made on them, etching on their memory details which at first sight seem irrelevant. The whole scene inside the tomb in some way caused them to intuit that the Lord has risen. Some of the words contained in the account need further explanation, so terse is the translation.

"The linen clothes lying there": the Greek particle translated as "lying there seems to indicate that the clothes were flattened, deflated, as if they were emptied when the body of Jesus rose and disappeared-as if it had come out of the clothes and bandages without their being unrolled, passing right through them (just as later he entered he Cenacle when the doors were shut). This would explain the clothes being "fallen", "flat" "lying", which is how the Greek literally translates, after Jesus' body-which had filled them-left them. One can readily understand how this would amaze a witness, how unforgettable the scene would be.

"The napkin ... rolled up in a place by itself"; the first point to note is that the napkin, which had been wrapped round the head, was not on

2174 Jesus rose from the dead "on the first day of the week."(Cf. Mt 28:1; Mk 16:2; Lk 24:1; Jn 20:1) Because it is the "first day," the day of Christ's Resurrection recalls the first creation. Because it is the "eighth day" following the sabbath,(Cf. Mk 16:1; Mt 28:1) it symbolizes the new creation ushered in by Christ's Resurrection. For Christians it has become the first of all days, the first of all feasts, the Lord's Day (*he kuriake hemera, dies dominica*) Sunday:

We all gather on the day of the sun, for it is the first day [after the Jewish sabbath, but also the first day] when God, separating matter from darkness, made the world; and on this same day Jesus Christ our Savior rose from the dead.(St. Justin, I Apol. 67: PG 6, 429 and 432)

Sharing and Discussion

1. What is the significance of such detail in reporting the resurrection?
2. Through this incident, what value do you see of living your faith in companionship with other believers?
3. The events at the tomb provide an analogy of the conversion process. In what ways are we to be evidence of Jesus' resurrection?

Closing Prayer

All: Glorious God of the living, you bestow grace beyond compare and life beyond measure. Be with us as we embrace this resurrection mystery and journey toward the fullness of life with you. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Leader: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life.

All: Amen

Second Reading — Colossians 3:1-4

¹ If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ² Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. ³ For you have died, and your life is hid with Christ in God. ⁴ When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

Catechism of The Catholic Church

515 The Gospels were written by men who were among the first to have the faith (Cf. Mk 1:1; Jn 21:24) and wanted to share it with others. Having known in faith who Jesus is, they could see and make others see the traces of his mystery in all his earthly life. From the swaddling clothes of his birth to the vinegar of his Passion and the shroud of his Resurrection, everything in Jesus' life was a sign of his mystery. (Cf. Lk 2:7; Mt 27: 48; Jn 20:7) His deeds, miracles and words all revealed that "in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily." (Col 2:9) His humanity appeared as "sacrament", that is, the sign and instrument, of his divinity and of the salvation he brings: what was visible in his earthly life leads to the invisible mystery of his divine sonship and redemptive mission.

640 "Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen." (Lk 24:5-6) The first element we encounter in the framework of the Easter events is the empty tomb. In itself it is not a direct proof of Resurrection; the absence of Christ's body from the tomb could be explained otherwise. (Cf. Jn 20:13; Mt 28:11-15) Nonetheless the empty tomb was still an essential sign for all. Its discovery by the disciples was the first step toward recognizing the very fact of the Resurrection. This was the case, first with the holy women, and then with Peter. (Cf. Lk 24:3, 12, 22-23) The disciple "whom Jesus loved" affirmed that when he entered the empty tomb and discovered "the linen cloths lying there", "he saw and believed". (Jn 20:2, 6, 8) This suggests that he realized from the empty tomb's condition that the absence of Jesus' body could not have been of human doing and that Jesus had not simply returned to earthly life as had been the case with Lazarus. (Cf. Jn 11:44; 20:5-7)

top of the clothes, but placed on one side. The second, even more surprising thing is that, like the clothes, it was still rolled up but, unlike the clothes, it still had a certain volume, like a container, possibly due to the stiffness given it by the ointments: this is what the Greek participle, here translated as "rolled", seems to indicate.

From these details concerning the empty tomb one deduces that Jesus' body must have risen in a heavenly manner, that is, in a way, which transcended the laws of nature. It was not only a matter of the body being reanimated as happened, for example, in the case of Lazarus, who had to be unbound before he could walk. (cf. Jn 11:44).

8-10. As Mary Magdalene had told them, the Lord was not in the tomb; but the two Apostles realized that there was no question of any robbery, which was what she thought had happened, because they saw the special way the clothes and napkin were; they now began to understand what the Master had so often said about his death and resurrection (cf. Mt 16:21; Mk 8:31; Lk 9:22; etc.: cf. also notes on Mt 12:39-40 and Lk 18:31-40).

The empty tomb and the other facts were perceptible to the senses; but the resurrection, even though it had effects that could be tested by experience, requires faith if it is to be accepted. Christ's resurrection is a real, historic fact: his body and soul were re-united. But since his was a glorious resurrection unlike Lazarus', far beyond our capacity in this life to understand what happened, and outside the scope of sense experience, a special gift of God is required—the gift of faith—to know and accept as a certainty this fact which, while it is historical, is also supernatural. Therefore, St Thomas Aquinas can say that "the individual arguments taken alone are not sufficient proof of Christ's resurrection, but taken together, in a cumulative way, they manifest it perfectly. Particularly important in this regard are the spiritual proofs (cf. specially Lk 24:25-27), the angelic testimony (cf. Lk 24:4-7) and Christ's own post-resurrection word confirmed by miracles (cf. Jn 3:13; Mt 16:21; 17: 22; 20:18)" (St Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, III, q. 55, a. 6 ad 1)

In addition to Christ's predictions about his passion, death and resurrection (cf. Jn 2:19; Mt 16:21; Mk 9:31; Lk 9:22), the Old Testament also foretells the glorious victory of the Messiah and, in some way, his resurrection (cf. Ps 16:9; Is 52:13; Hos 6:2). The Apostles begin to grasp the true meaning of the Sacred Scripture after the resurrection, particularly once they received the Holy Spirit, who fully enlightens their minds to understand the content of the

Word of God. It is easy to imagine the surprise and elation they all feel when Peter and John tell them what they have seen in the tomb.

Gospel Reflection

Even on this day when the gospel announces the risen Lord, we feel the contradictions that the resurrection mystery arouses—seeing and believing on the one hand, misunderstanding and confusion on the other. This mystery defies all human understanding. These Easter stories tell us that the resurrection isn't something we understand but something we believe and live.

We might take our clue to entering into the mystery from the second reading (from 1 Corinthians). Lent has been the time when we cleared out the old yeast (of "malice and wickedness") "so that [we] may become a fresh batch of dough." Like Christ, our "paschal lamb [who] has been sacrificed," we, too, must be willing to give ourselves up in the self-sacrifice "of sincerity and truth." Inasmuch as we are the dough, we must be willing to allow others to feast on us. When Paul invites the Corinthians, "let us celebrate the feast," it is truly a startling invitation: as Jesus gave his body on the cross and gives his Body and Blood to us as nourishment, so must we do the same for others. The only way to open ourselves to the new life that God promises through the resurrection of Jesus Christ is to open ourselves to the needs of others in self-giving. If we try to *understand* this resurrection mystery we will miss it. The readings today invite us to *live* the mystery by self-sacrifice; in this way God gives us the new life that Jesus' resurrection offers.

The gospel identifies three characters: Mary of Magdala, Peter, and the "disciple whom Jesus loved." By not being named, John can function symbolically— all of us are the "disciple whom Jesus loved." Instead of trying to understand we simply "run" to the mystery and embrace it so that we, like John, can enter into it and see and believe. In John's gospel seeing and believing aren't mental exercises but actions that express one's inner disposition. Our belief in the resurrection is a matter of a willingness to embrace self-sacrifice, allowing others to "feast" on us.

Even on this Easter day when we rejoice in the risen life of Jesus, we are reminded that resurrection has its cost: self-emptying for the sake of others. The paradox of Christianity is that dying to self isn't something to avoid, but it is the way we remove the stone that blocks our own hearts from receiving new life. We have the next fifty days of Easter to help us grasp in our hearts and daily living that when we reach out to others we

are actually living Jesus' risen life. We need only take the time to contemplate this mystery and recognize the good with which God blesses us. We need to see beyond the obvious—an empty tomb and the demands of self-emptying—to the glory that God has bestowed through Christ Jesus.

The alleluia that bursts forth with the news of resurrection captures a heartfelt cry that we be willing to identify ourselves with the dying and rising Christ. Let the feast begin!

Old and New Testament links

First Reading — Acts 10:34, 37-43

³⁴ And Peter opened his mouth and said: "Truly I perceive that God shows no partiality, ... ³⁷ the word which was proclaimed throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee after the baptism which John preached: ³⁸ how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. ³⁹ And we are witnesses to all that he did both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree; ⁴⁰ but God raised him on the third day and made him manifest; ⁴¹ not to all the people but to us who were chosen by God as witnesses, who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. ⁴² And he commanded us to preach to the people, and to testify that he is the one ordained by God to be judge of the living and the dead. ⁴³ To him all the prophets bear witness that every one who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name."

Responsorial Reading — Psalm 118:1-2, 16-17, 22-23

¹ O give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his steadfast love endures for ever!

² Let Israel say, "His steadfast love endures for ever..."

¹⁶ the right hand of the LORD is exalted, the right hand of the LORD does valiantly!"

¹⁷ I shall not die, but I shall live, and recount the deeds of the LORD.

...

²² The stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the corner. ²³ This is the LORD's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes.