



# LIVING THE GOSPEL



## Easter Sunday of the Lord's Resurrection March 31, 2024

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**Theme: "...<sup>9</sup> for as yet they did not know the scripture, that he must rise from the dead."**

### **Gathering Prayer**

**All:** O God, who on this day, through your Only Begotten Son, have conquered death and unlocked for us the path to eternity, grant that we who keep the solemnity of the Lord's Resurrection may, through the renewal brought by your Spirit, rise up in the light of life. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

### **Exploring the Word**

#### **Gospel Reading: John 20:1-9**

<sup>1</sup> 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. <sup>2</sup> 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." <sup>3</sup> Peter then came out with the other disciple, and they went toward the tomb. <sup>4</sup> They both ran, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first; <sup>5</sup> and stooping to look in, he saw the linen cloths lying there, but he did not go in. <sup>6</sup> Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb; he saw the linen cloths lying, <sup>7</sup> and the napkin, which had been on his head, not lying with the linen cloths but rolled up in a place by itself. <sup>8</sup> Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; <sup>9</sup> for as yet they did not know the scripture, that he must rise from the dead.

#### **Gospel Focus**

Even on Easter Sunday, the disciples do not quite get it. Jesus' resurrection is still hidden in mystery. There are hints here—an empty tomb and burial cloths. But Mary Magdalene misread the empty tomb; she assumes that someone has taken Jesus' body. The fullness of what has happened has yet to be revealed. So it is for us, who live in the light of the resurrection and yet still experience pain and suffering and loss. Easter joy is not always accessible in its fullness, but we know there is more there than we can see.

## **Gospel Reflection**

When a loved one dies, the world seems at first completely out of kilter. Daily rhythms are disrupted. Relationships shift. Things that seemed important before take a back seat, while other urgent concerns come to the fore. A whole reorientation to life without the physical presence of the loved one is necessary. In the gospel, we catch a glimpse of how the first disciples of Jesus navigated the difficult days in the aftermath of his death, how they had to construct their lives and meaning anew.

One of the key messages of the Gospel of John, from which the gospel of Easter Sunday morning comes, is that the resurrection is not simply a "happily-ever-after" ending or the fulfillment of our expectations. It turns the world on end, and defies explanation. It is God's final parable.

John's Gospel drives home the central question: where is Jesus now? A single character, Mary Magdalene, represents the voice of the community, as she seeks her beloved, and laments, "We don't know where they put him" (20:2). Her search echoes that of a lover in the Song of Songs. "I sought him whom my soul loves; I sought him, but found him not" (Song 3:1). The question, "Where?" permeates the whole of John's Gospel. The first followers want to know, "Where are you staying?" (1:38). And in his final address to his disciples, Jesus speaks to them about the eternal dwelling place, which is not a geographical space but his very self. (15: 4-10)

In John 20 there are two parts to the answer of where Jesus is now. On Easter morning, we hear the first half: he has returned to the Father (20:1-9). Mary, Peter and the Beloved Disciple all verify that he is not in the tomb. The latter two returned home, not understanding, but Mary refuses to leave and continues her search.

In the gospel reading that will be proclaimed at the weekday Mass in just a couple of days, on the Tuesday in the octave of Easter, we hear the second half of the answer. Jesus himself appears directly to Mary Magdalene and tells her not to cling to him as the earthly person she knew previously. He directs her to go to the gathered community of the brothers and sisters: it is there that he is to be found alive (20:17). In the resurrection appearance stories, the gospel focuses more on what happens to us than what happened to Jesus. A gospel that began by reflecting on how "the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us" (1:14) concludes with the Word becoming enfleshed in each individual believer and in the whole body of the faith community. That is where he is to be found as his transformation is completed in our own.

Where do you experience Christ most present today, in your life? And where in the life of your faith community?

## **Old/New Testament and CCC links**

### **First Reading — Acts 10:34, 37-43**

<sup>34</sup> And Peter opened his mouth and said: "Truly I perceive that God shows no partiality, ... <sup>37</sup> the word which was proclaimed throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee after the baptism which John preached: <sup>38</sup> 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. <sup>39</sup> 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; <sup>40</sup> but God raised him on the third day and made him manifest; <sup>41</sup> not to all the people but to us who were chosen by him as witnesses, who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. <sup>42</sup> 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. <sup>43</sup> To him all the prophets bear witness that every one who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name."

### **Responsorial Reading — Ps 118:1-2, 16-17, 22-23**

***R: This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad.***

Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, for his mercy endures forever.  
Let the house of Israel say, "His mercy endures forever." **(R)**

"The right hand of the Lord has struck with power; the right hand of the Lord is exalted.  
I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord." **(R)**

The stone which the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.  
By the Lord has this been done; it is wonderful in our eyes. **(R)**

### **Second Reading — Colossians 3:1-4**

<sup>1</sup> If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. <sup>2</sup> Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. <sup>3</sup> For you have died, and your life is hid with Christ in God. <sup>4</sup> 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)

**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. The disciples of this gospel do not encounter the risen Jesus but rather seen hints of what has happened. What convince you that Jesus is indeed risen?
2. Even faced with the empty tomb, Mary Magdalene and Peter and the other disciple need to grow in their understanding of Jesus' death-defying work. How do you seek a greater understanding of how God is working in your life? How intentional has it been?
3. "You shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem" What is the significance of Easter for you? The Easter experience helped the disciples fulfil this command; does it have the same effect on you?

### **Closing Prayer**

**All:** Redeeming God, you promise your people life in glory alongside your son Jesus. Here our prayers, that through the paschal mystery we may grow, in faith, hope and love. We ask this through Christ, our risen Lord. Amen.

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

**All:** Amen