

**LIVING THE GOSPEL**  
**Easter Sunday**  
**April 5, 2026**



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**Closing Prayer**

**Facilitator:** Loving God, you conquered the grave and invite us to life in you. As we celebrate the joy of your resurrection, we pray that you will continue to hear our needs and answer them so that we, too, might be redeemed agents of light and life. We ask this through your Christ, our Lord.

**All:** Amen.

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

**All:** Amen

**Theme: "He commissioned us to preach to the people."**

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**Gathering Prayer**

**Facilitator:** O God, who on this day, through your Only Begotten Son, have conquered death and unlocked for us the path to eternity, grant, we pray, 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.

**All:** Amen.

**Exploring the Word**

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

<sup>1</sup> It was very early on the first day of the week and still dark, when Mary of Magdala came to the tomb. She saw that the stone had been moved away from the tomb <sup>2</sup> and came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved. 'They have taken the Lord out of the tomb' she said 'and we don't know where they have put him.'

<sup>3</sup> So Peter set out with the other disciple to go to the tomb. <sup>4</sup> They ran together, but the other disciple, running faster than Peter, reached the tomb first; <sup>5</sup> he bent down and saw the linen cloths lying on the ground, but did not go in. <sup>6</sup> Simon Peter who was following now came up, went right into the tomb, saw the linen cloths on the ground, <sup>7</sup> and also the cloth that had been over his head; this was not with the linen cloths but rolled up in a place by itself. <sup>8</sup> Then the other disciple who had reached the tomb first also went in; he saw and he believed. <sup>9</sup> Till this moment they had failed to understand the teaching of scripture that he must rise from the dead.

## Gospel Notes

**1-2.** All four Gospels report 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 28:1-15; 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 because he was the 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 had risen. Some of the words contained in the account need further explanation, so terse is the translation.

"The linen clothes lying there": the Greek participle 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 the 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.

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. In the gospel reading, Mary Magdalene is initially unable to believe that Jesus has risen, instead thinking that his body must have been carried away. What prevents you from seeing God's action in your life?

2. In the first reading from Acts, Peter shares the story of Jesus with Cornelius, a Roman centurion sent to him by an angel. How are you called to witness to the resurrection in this Easter?

## Responsorial Reading — Psalm 117:1-2, 16-17, 22-23

**R: This day was made by the Lord: we rejoice and are glad.**

Give thanks to the Lord for he is good, for his love has no end.  
Let the sons of Israel say: 'His love has no end.' **(R)**

The Lord's right hand has triumphed; his right hand raised me up.  
I shall not die, I shall live and recount his deeds. **(R)**

The stone which the builders rejected has become the corner stone.  
This is the work of the Lord, a marvel in our eyes. **(R)**

## Second Reading — Colossians 3:1-4

<sup>1</sup> Since you have been brought back to true life with Christ, you must look for the things that are in heaven, where Christ is, sitting at God's right hand. <sup>2</sup> Let your thoughts be on heavenly things, not on the things that are on the earth, <sup>3</sup> because you have died, and now the life you have is hidden with Christ in God. <sup>4</sup> But when Christ is revealed — and he is your life — you too will be revealed in all your glory with him.

## 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,

"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 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 told them 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. in 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 Sacred Scripture after the resurrection,

particularly once they receive 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 Focus**

Each of us is commissioned to share the gospel of Jesus, both in word and action. This call begins with the experience of Mary Magdalene at the tomb on Easter morning and exemplified by Peter's proclamation in the first reading from Acts. Sharing the Scripture at Mass is one way of doing this of course, but the whole of our lives should be touched by Easter joy. Paul conveys this in today's epistle reading-in the resurrection of Christ, each of us is offered the grace to welcome the kingdom of God into our families, communities, and relationships.

## **Gospel Reflection**

A theme in this gospel passage is that of running. Mary of Magdala ran to tell the disciples what she found at the tomb. Peter and the other disciple ran to the empty tomb, finding the burial cloths neatly rolled. It's easy to imagine why each of them was struck with such an urgency to run-Mary couldn't wait to share what she had seen, and the men wanted to see the tomb for themselves because it sounded unfathomable. John recounts, "For they did not yet understand the Scripture that he had to rise from the dead." The extent of what they "saw and believe" was that the Messiah was not there. The disciples did not know what was happening on that first Easter Sunday, but they therefore ran anxiously to discover the reason for his absence.

We see the mention of running several other places in the Scripture, the most notable being the scene of the father running to meet his prodigal son who has return home. The father ran in thanksgiving and overwhelming joy to greet the man who had squandered his money, resorting to eat with swine, and felt unworthy to even be a servant on his land. Luke writes that the father was out watching for his son and saw him while he was still far away. As far as we know, the father has no way of knowing that his son was on his journey back home, and yet he was anxiously waiting and watching for him.

Later, the author of Hebrews writes, "let us rid ourselves of every

burden and sin that clings to us and persevere in running the race that lies before us while keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus, the leader and perfecter of faith"(Heb 12: 1-2). The truth of the resurrection is meant to enliven us and give us the strength and hope needed to persevere in living holy and faithful lives. We run not only to encounter the risen Lord, but we also run forth with purpose to spread the good news of the living God.

On Easter Sunday, the church celebrates the empty tomb as a climax of salvation history that had set in motion from the very moment of the fall of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. We have the blessing of knowing the great mystery and the great joy that the disciples would come to learn-that the messiah had risen from the dead, defeating the sting of death for all. Whether we approach the tomb after a Lenten season that has been full of struggle, the Father is watching for us just the same, ready to embrace us and celebrate the majesty of his risen Son. May we also run to the empty tomb today with the sweet confidence of knowing that God is already running to greet each of us.

## **Old and New Testament links**

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

<sup>34</sup> Peter addressed Cornelius and his household:

<sup>37</sup> 'You must have heard about the recent happenings in Judaea; about Jesus of Nazareth and how he began in Galilee, after John had been preaching baptism. <sup>38</sup> *God had anointed him with the Holy Spirit and with power, and because God was with him, Jesus went about doing good and curing all who had fallen into the power of the devil.*

<sup>39</sup> Now I, and those with me, can witness to everything he did throughout the countryside of Judaea and in Jerusalem itself: and also to the fact that they killed him by hanging him on a tree, <sup>40</sup> yet three days afterwards God raised him to life and allowed him to be seen, <sup>41</sup> not by the whole people but only by certain witnesses God had chosen beforehand. Now we are those witnesses — we have eaten and drunk with him after his resurrection from the dead — <sup>42</sup> and he has ordered us to proclaim this to his people and to tell them that God has appointed him to judge everyone, alive or dead. <sup>43</sup> It is to him that all the prophets bear this witness: that all who believe in Jesus will have their sins forgiven through his name.'