

Easter Sunday- April 1, 2018
Cathedral of Saint Paul
Readings: Acts 10:37-43; Colossians 3:1-4 John 20:1-9

“They have taken the Lord from the tomb, and we do not know where they have put him.” This matter of fact and completely reasonable statement from Mary Magdalene serves as the backdrop for the miraculous events of Easter Sunday. How could she have known the true depth of her statement? It was practical and mysteriously prophetic.

What were the women thinking to themselves that morning? They were still in shock; they simply wanted to be in the presence of Jesus, to anoint his body, yet they did no real planning to facilitate this. They could not explain their actions, their motives remain somewhat shrouded. They simply wanted to be there.

The women’s instincts were spot on—something drew them to the tomb. Was it really all over? Could they not accept it and had to see again for themselves? Or, did their faith draw them there hoping against hope that he would be risen? It is left to the young or to those not judged to be as ‘worthy’ to teach the rest of us a lesson in the meaning of true faith.

These women were hoping against hope that Jesus would not leave them orphaned—they believed in his word. I speak of Mary Magdalene, from whom Jesus had cast seven demons and often seen in tradition as the woman who anointed the Savior’s feet in a city of Galilee.

To whom did Jesus appear first? To whose ears did the news first reach? To the learned, the clever, the prepared, the logical, the teachers, the important people? No he did not. He appeared first to those who were his most faithful disciples—those who would hope against hope. Jesus Christ rose for the four-year old who innocently approached the Cross Friday to kiss the feet on the saddest of all Christian days.

Jesus Christ rose for the single young adult who traverses this world sometimes feeling alone, overwhelmed by the cares with which he or she must contend on a daily basis. Jesus rose for the elderly widow, who has

outlived her friends and relatives, and yet who faithfully comes to church each Sunday. Jesus rose for the business executive, on whose judgment rests the employment of hundreds, perhaps thousands of people.

Jesus Christ rose even for the prisoner who has fought the demons within for so long yet finally lost the battle, committing a crime, robbing another of his dignity. He now sits alone, contemplating a future removed from society. Jesus Christ rose for them just as he did for us.

As the Holy Father said last evening at the Easter Vigil:

Yesterday, we joined the women in contemplating “the one who was pierced” (cf. *Jn* 19:36; cf. *Zech* 12:10). Today, with them, we are invited to contemplate the empty tomb and to hear the words of the angel: “Do not be afraid... for he has been raised” (*Mt* 28:5-6)

Sacred Scripture teaches that the women brought with them sweet spices. Today, those souls who because of their holy love come seeking the Lord—you and me—we can bring to the tomb the sweet scent of virtue, so said St. Gregory the Great in an Easter sermon.¹ It is useless to enter the tomb—it is clearly empty. Unless we spread the Good News, what difference does it make? An empty cave is an empty cave. Unless we comprehend the reason for its emptiness, it remains a symbol of defeat, as does the Cross.

But Jesus Christ changed all that—if we are to be his disciples we must not fail to proclaim that there is more to the world than what we see. The symbol of defeat has been transformed into an instrument for our salvation. We all need the love of Jesus. Today, our Lord delivers! The emptiness of the tomb serves to remind us that the whole world’s space cannot contain Him who comes from heaven and who must return there. But not before he leaves us all that we need to live our lives through Him, with Him, and In Him. This is our call; this is the cause of our joy, the joy of the Gospel.

¹ St. Gregory the Great, Sermon on the Mystery of the Resurrection, paragraph #2

We must not remain sitting here—we must go, tell his disciples, tell Peter, tell all that the emptiness of the tomb has brought about the fullness of life in us. He has been raised; he is not here. Let us go forth to proclaim the Good News.