

## GOSPEL

MATTHEW 28:1-10

After the sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. And suddenly there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord, descending from heaven, came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. For fear of him the guards shook and became like dead men. But the angel said to the women, 'Do not be afraid; I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for he has been raised, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples, "He has been raised from the dead, and indeed he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him." This is my message for you.' So they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. Suddenly Jesus met them and said, 'Greetings!' And they came to him, took hold of his feet, and worshipped him. Then Jesus said to them, 'Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me.'

## A REFLECTION BY POPE FRANCIS

Happy Easter! "Cristòs anèsti! — Alethòs anèsti!", "Christ is risen! — He is risen indeed!". He is among us. This week we can continue to exchange Easter greetings, as though it were one single day. It is the great day which the Lord has made.

In today's Gospel passage, we can hear the echo of the words the Angel addressed to the women who had hastened to the sepulchre: "*Then go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen*". We feel as if this invitation is also directed to us; to "hasten" and to "go" announce to the men and women of our times this message of joy and hope, of certain hope, because from the dawn of the third day, Jesus who was crucified, is raised. Death no longer has the last word. Life does! This is our certainty. The sepulchre does not have the last word; it is not death, it is life! This is why we repeat "Christ is Risen", many times. Because in Him, the sepulchre was overcome. Life was born.

In light of this event which constitutes the true and real news of history and the cosmos, we are called to be new men and women in accordance with the Spirit, *confirming the value of life*. There is life! This is already the beginning of rebirth! We will be men and women of resurrection, men

and women of life, if in the midst of the events that afflict the world — there are many of them today —, in the midst of worldliness which distances us from God, we will know how to offer gestures of solidarity and gestures of welcome, strengthening the universal desire for peace and the hope for an environment free from degradation. These are common and human signs, which if supported and kept alive by faith in the Risen Lord, acquire a power that is well beyond our abilities. And this is so because Christ is alive and working in history through his Holy Spirit: He redeems our shortcomings and reaches each human heart and gives back hope to whomever is oppressed and suffering.

Over the course of this week it will do us good to take up the Book of the Gospel and read those chapters which speak about Jesus' Resurrection. It will really do us good! To take up the Book, look for the chapter and read it. It will also benefit us this week to think about the joy of Mary, the Mother of Jesus. Just as her pain was intimate enough to pierce her soul, so too her joy was also intimate and deep, and the disciples were able to draw from it. Having passed through the experience of the death and Resurrection of her Son, seen in faith as the supreme expression of God's love, Mary's heart became a font of peace, consolation, hope and mercy. All of the prerogatives of our Mother derive from this, from her participation Jesus' Paschal Mystery. From Friday until Sunday morning she did not lose hope: we contemplated the sorrowful Mother but, at the same time, the Mother full of hope. She, who is the Mother of all of the disciples, the Mother of the Church, is the Mother of hope.

May the Virgin Mary, silent witness of the death and Resurrection of her Son Jesus, help us to be clear signs of the Risen Christ amid the affairs of the world, so that those who suffer tribulation and difficulties do not fall victim to pessimism, defeat, and resignation, but find in us many brothers and sisters who offer them support and solace. May our Mother help us to believe firmly in the Resurrection of Jesus: Jesus is Risen; He is alive here among us and this is a worthy mystery of salvation with the ability to transform hearts and life. May She intercede especially for the persecuted and oppressed Christian communities which, in many parts of the world today, are called to a more difficult and courageous testimony.

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- Place yourself in the situation of Mary — really picture yourself in the scene, encountering the tomb, an earthquake, the stunned guards, and angel — and then Jesus. What thoughts or feelings arise in you?
- Jesus tells the women - Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me? The son of God, the king of Glory, has enabled us to be called adopted sons and daughters of the father — He now calls us brothers and sisters! How does it make you feel to realise you are a brother or sister of the King?
- If we really believe in the resurrection, we will be joyful! That is a true mark of a believer. Do you believe? Is joy part of who you are? — do you truly realise that in the end nothing else really matters and that Jesus by his death and resurrection has defeated sin and death for us?

## PRAYER

*Spend some time in prayer with one another*

1. Conscious of what has just been shared, members briefly name/ describe their prayer needs.
2. Intentionally call on the Holy Spirit to be present (e.g. "Come Holy Spirit, please be present as we pray")
3. Move to prayers of thanks and praise to God.
4. Pray for each others' prayer needs. Where appropriate, you may like to encourage the group to place a hand on the shoulder of the individual that you are currently praying for.
5. Conclude your prayer time with another prayer of praise, perhaps reciting the 'Glory Be' or similar prayer.