

## GOSPEL

MARK 16:1-7

When the sabbath was over, Mary of Magdala, Mary the mother of James, and Salome, bought spices with which to go and anoint him. And very early in the morning on the first day of the week they went to the tomb, just as the sun was rising.

They had been saying to one another, ‘Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?’ But when they looked they could see that the stone – which was very big – had already been rolled back. On entering the tomb they saw a young man in a white robe seated on the right hand side, and they were struck with amazement. But he said to them, ‘There is no need for alarm. You are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified: he has risen, he is not here. See, here is the place where they laid him. But you must go and tell his disciples and Peter, “He is going before you to Galilee; it is there you will see him, just as he told you.”’

## A REFLECTION BY POPE FRANCIS

The Gospels (cf. Mt 28:1-10, Mk 16:1-7; Lk 24:1-12), in fact, recount that when the women went to the Sepulchre, they found it open. They feared they would not be able to enter because the tomb had been sealed with a large rock. Instead, it was open, and a voice from within told them that Jesus was not there but had Risen.

The words: “*he has Risen*” are uttered for the first time. The Evangelists tell us that this first announcement was made by *angels*, that is, by God’s messengers. There is a significance in this angelic presence: just as the Angel Gabriel announced the Incarnation of the Word, so too a human word was not adequate to announce the Resurrection for the first time. A higher being was needed to communicate a reality that was so awe-inspiring, so incredible that perhaps no human being would have dared to utter it. After this first announcement, the community of disciples begins to repeat: “The Lord has risen indeed, and

has appeared to Simon!” (Lk 24:34). This is a beautiful announcement.

We can all say it together now: “The Lord has risen indeed”. This first announcement — “The Lord has risen indeed!” — required an intelligence that was superior to that of human beings.

Today is a festive and joyful day customarily spent with family. It is a family day. After celebrating Easter, one feels the need to gather again with one’s loved ones and with friends to celebrate, because *fraternity* is the fruit of the Easter of Christ who, with his death and Resurrection, conquered sin which separated man from God, man from himself, man from his brothers. But we know that sin always separates, always creates hostility. Jesus broke down the wall that divides people and restored peace, beginning to weave the fabric of a new fraternity. It is so important in our time to rediscover brotherhood as it was experienced by the early Christian communities; to rediscover how to make room for Jesus who never divides and always unites. There cannot be true communion and commitment to the common good and social justice without fraternity and sharing. Without fraternal sharing, no ecclesial or civil community can be formed: there is only an ensemble of individuals moved or grouped together, according to common interests. But brotherhood is a grace that Jesus creates.

The Easter of Christ has caused another thing to erupt into the world: *the novelty of dialogue and relationship*, a novelty which has become a responsibility for Christians. Jesus in fact said: “By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (Jn 13:35). This is why we cannot close ourselves off in our private world, within our group, but instead we are called to safeguard the common good and to take care of our brothers and sisters, in particular those who are weakest and most marginalized. Only fraternity can guarantee a lasting peace, can overcome poverty, can extinguish tension and war, can eradicate corruption and crime. May the Angel

who tells us: “He has risen” help us to live the fraternity and the novelty of dialogue and relationships and of concern for the common good.

May the Virgin Mary whom, in this time of Easter, we invoke with the title *Queen of Heaven*, support us with her prayers so that the fraternity and communion that we experience in these days of Easter may become our way of life and the spirit of our relationships.

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- Have you ever been ‘struck with amazement’ at something that God has done either in your own life or the life of another person? What effect did this have on your life of faith?
- Pope Francis describes the resurrection as being a source of unity, dialogue and relationship. In what ways has this been true for you in your life?
- The women were sent on mission - to proclaim the resurrection - which they did. In what ways does the resurrection impact your life?

## 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.