

GOSPEL

JOHN 20:1-9

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 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.’

So Peter set out with the other disciple to go to the tomb. They ran together, but the other disciple, running faster than Peter, reached the tomb first; he bent down and saw the linen cloths lying on the ground, but did not go in. Simon Peter who was following now came up, went right into the tomb, saw the linen cloths on the ground, 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. Then the other disciple who had reached the tomb first also went in; he saw and he believed. Till this moment they had failed to understand the teaching of scripture, that he must rise from the dead.

The Gospel of the Lord.

A REFLECTION BY POPE FRANCIS

It is Easter again and our hearts are filled with the joy of the Resurrection. After the Lenten season, the time of penance and conversion, after the striking celebrations of the Holy Triduum; today too, we stand before Jesus’ empty tomb, and we meditate with wonder and gratitude on the Resurrection of the Lord.

Life has conquered death. Mercy and Love have conquered sin! We need faith and hope in order to open ourselves to this new and marvellous horizon. And we know that faith and hope are gifts from God, and we need to ask for them: “Lord, grant me faith, grant me hope! I need them so much!”. Let us be permeated by the emotions that resound in the Easter sequence: “Yes, we are sure of it: Christ indeed from death is risen”. The Lord has risen among us! This truth indelibly marked the lives of the Apostles who,

after the Resurrection, again sensed the need to follow their Teacher and, having received the Holy Spirit, set out fearlessly to proclaim to all what they had seen with their own eyes and personally experienced.

Each year we are called to rediscover and to receive with particular intensity the comforting news of the Resurrection: “Christ my hope is arisen!”. Since Christ is resurrected, we can look with new eyes and a new heart at every event of our lives, even the most negative ones. Moments of darkness, of failure and even sin can be transformed and announce the beginning of a new path. When we have reached the lowest point of our misery and our weakness, the Risen Christ gives us the strength to rise again. If we entrust ourselves to him, his grace saves us! The Lord, Crucified and Risen, is the full revelation of mercy, present and working throughout history. This is the Paschal message that resounds again today and will resound for the whole Easter Season until Pentecost.

The silent witness to the events of Jesus’ Passion and Resurrection was Mary. She stood beside the Cross: she did not fold in the face of pain; her faith made her strong. In the broken heart of the Mother, the flame of hope was kept ever burning. Let us ask her to help us too to fully accept the Easter proclamation of the Resurrection, so as to embody it in the concreteness of our daily lives.

May the Virgin Mary give us the faithful certitude that every step suffered on our journey, illuminated by the light of Easter, will become a blessing and a joy for us and for others, especially for those suffering because of selfishness and indifference.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- Peter & John both relied on evidence, both personal experience and understanding the scriptures, in order to understand the resurrection of Jesus. What gives you certainty about the resurrection of Jesus?
- Have you ever experienced ‘resurrection’ in your life? What was ‘left behind’ and what was the ‘new life’ like that you were raised into experiencing?

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.