

Scripture Study

Easter Sunday



Opening prayer

Acts 10:34a, 37-43

(Ps 118:1-2, 16-17, 22-23)

Colossians 3:1-4

John 20:1-9

Overview of the Gospel:

- On the third day after Jesus' death on the cross Mary Magdalene, accompanied by some other women (Matthew 28:1; Mark 16:1; Luke 23:55—24:1), come to the tomb fully expecting to find Jesus' body. Imagine her reaction when she finds the heavy stone rolled back and the body gone! Her first thought was to run to tell Peter, the leader of the remaining apostles.
- Although Peter at first doubted her story (Luke 24:11), he and "the other apostle" (by tradition, John), also run to the tomb. They find the burial cloths in such a state that made it clear that the body had not been stolen (verses 6-7). At this point, they still could not grasp that Jesus had risen, as he predicted he would. Later, however, they would have no doubt.
- That Jesus rose from the dead is the most well-attested miracle in Scripture. The Old Testament foretold it; Jesus predicted it on more than one occasion; it was confirmed by his several appearances (John 20:19—21:1; Acts 1:3; Luke 24:13-35; 1 Corinthians 15:3-8). It was even verified by the Roman soldiers guarding his tomb (Matthew 28:11-15)! Let us rejoice today that Jesus has defeated sin and death—**Alleluia! He is risen indeed!**

Questions:

- Put yourself in the place of Mary. What is your emotional state in the days following the crucifixion? Why do you go to the tomb so early? How do you react to the empty tomb?
- According to the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds, how long was Jesus dead and his body in the tomb (John 2:18-22; Acts 10:40; CCC 994)? What did Jesus do for that time while in the tomb (1 Peter 3:19, 4:6; CCC 631-33)?
- What had the disciples been told in advance about Jesus rising from the dead (Matthew 16:21, 27:63)? How do the positions of the linen shroud and the napkin provide corroborating evidence of the Resurrection? What is your proof that Jesus rose from the dead?
- How should we respond to the empty tomb? Why did John preach the message (John 19:35, 17:20; 1 John 5:13)?
- When a loved one dies or life seems cruel or a drudgery, how does the Resurrection of Jesus help you deal with your pain?

Catechism of the Catholic Church: §§ 2174, 515, 631-658

Closing prayer

It is no great thing to believe that Christ died; for this is something that is also believed by pagans and Jews and besides by all the wicked: everyone believes that He died. The Christians' faith is in Christ's Resurrection; that is what we hold to be a great thing--to believe that He rose. —St Augustine

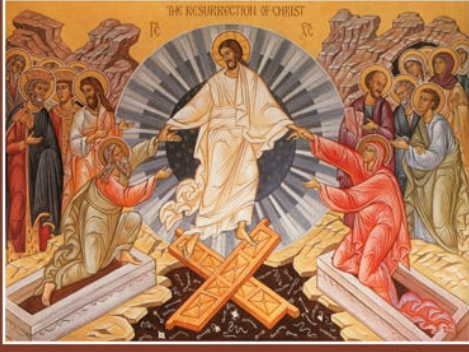
Remember to read and meditate on the daily Mass readings found in the bulletin!

"As yet they did not know the scripture, that Jesus must rise from the dead"

Scripture: *John 20:1-9*

Meditation: On Sunday morning the women went to the tomb to pay their last tribute to a dead body. The disciples thought that everything had finished in tragedy. Neither were ready to see an empty tomb and hear the angel's message, *Why do you seek the living among the dead* (Luke 24:5)? Mary Magdalene is the first to report the startling news of the empty tomb! She assumed that Jesus' body had been stolen! She was not yet prepared to meet the risen Lord who would reveal himself to her while she later lingered in the garden near the tomb (John 20:11-18).

What is the significance of the stone being rolled away? It would have taken several people to roll away such a stone. And besides, the sealed tomb had been guarded by soldiers! This is clearly the first sign of the resurrection. Bede, a church father from the 8th century, comments: "[The angel] rolled back the stone not to throw open a way for our Lord to come forth, but to provide evidence to people that he had already come forth. As the virgin's womb was closed, so the sepulcher was closed, yet he entered the world through her closed womb, and so he left the world through the closed sepulcher." (From *Homilies on the Gospels* 2,7,24) Another church father remarked: "To behold the resurrection, the stone must first be rolled away from our hearts" (Peter Chrysologus, 5th century). It is significant that the disciples had to first deal with the empty tomb



before they could come to grips with the fact that scripture had foretold that Jesus would die for our sins and then rise triumphant. They disbelieved until they saw the empty tomb.

John, the beloved disciple of Jesus, wrote his gospel as an eye-witness of the Word of God who became flesh and dwelt among us, and who died and rose for our salvation. John was the only apostle, along with the women who stood with Jesus at the foot of the cross, who witnessed Jesus' death on Good Friday. Now John is the first of the apostles, along with Peter, to see the empty tomb on Easter Sunday morning, after the women returned and gave their report. What did John see in the tomb that led him to believe in the resurrection of Jesus? It was certainly not a dead body. The dead body of Jesus would have disproven the resurrection and made his death a tragic conclusion to a glorious career as a great teacher and miracle worker. When John saw the empty tomb he must have recalled Jesus' prophecy that he would rise again after three days. Through the gift of faith John realized that no tomb on earth

could contain the Lord and giver of life.

John in his first epistle testifies: *What we have seen, heard, and touched we proclaim as the word of life which existed "from the beginning"* (1 John 1:1-4). John bears witness to what has existed from all eternity. This "word of life" is Jesus the word incarnate, but also Jesus as the word announced by the prophets and Jesus the word now preached throughout the Christian church for all ages to come. One thing is certain, if Jesus had not risen from the dead and appeared to his disciples, we would never have heard of him. Nothing else could have changed sad and despairing men and women into people radiant with joy and courage. The reality of the resurrection is the central fact of the Christian faith. Through the gift of the Holy Spirit, the Lord gives us "eyes of faith" to know him and the power of his resurrection. The greatest joy we can have is to encounter the living Lord and to know him personally. Do you celebrate the feast of Easter with joy and thanksgiving for the victory which Jesus has won for you over sin and death?

"Lord Jesus Christ, you have triumphed over the grave and you have won new life for us. Give me the eyes of faith to see you in your glory. Help me to draw near to you and to grow in the knowledge of your great love and victory over sin and death."

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