

EASTER SUNDAY
THE UNEXPECTED COURAGE

“It was very early on the first day of the week and still dark, when Mary of Magdala came to the tomb” (Jn. 20: 1)

The Resurrection: It is Easter morning. It is a joyful morning. It is a morning of hope fulfilled. It is the day of the resurrection. “This is the day the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it” (Ps. 118: 24). It is a fact of history that Christ was raised from the dead by the power and authority of Him, who sent Him. The glorification of the Son by the Father which began with His Passion is completed in His Resurrection – the conquering of the power of death, the breaking of the chains that held us down in slavery to sin; the break forth of light from the darkness of the grave. Now victory has been gained, salvation has been won, our debt has been paid in full and we are children of light, heirs of the Kingdom, sharing the same inheritance from the One, whom we have the privilege to call “Abba - Father.” These are the reasons for our joyful celebrations.

The Empty Tomb and the Absent Jesus: The account of the Resurrection as presented to us by John’s Gospel (Jn. 20: 1-9) is dramatic revealing three main characters. But there is someone missing. Jesus is not there. Whereas the synoptics narrative mentions the appearance of Jesus on the scene, St. John lays emphasis on the “absence of Jesus” as a sign of His Resurrection. If I were John or Jesus, I would have made it big! I would have gone to Pilate and Herod, to the Chief priests and the Sanhedrin, and make it the biggest “What-did-I-tell -you” story of all times. But Jesus is not like that. And that was not the aim of John. The empty tomb is the indisputable fact of the Resurrection, testified to by the Roman soldiers who guarded the tomb (Matt28: 11-15). The absence or disappearance of Jesus is the first indication that he has risen as He said (Matt. 20: 17-19).

The Journey of Courage and Love: St. John’s account gives the initial impression that Mary went alone to the grave, when it was “still dark.” (Jn. 20: 1). We can only conjecture that she was with other women when she tenders her report in the second verse using the pronoun “we.” St. Luke names Joanna and Mary, the mother of James to be among the women that went to the grave that early morning (Lk. 24: 10). St. Mark mentions Salome in addition (Mk. 16: 1). Be this as it may, the journey undertaken by any woman or group of women at such a time in the Jewish culture of that time was one of outstanding courage

motivated by deep love. For true love is never afraid and never in doubt. These women are icons of Resurrection. Such are the attitudes that expected of us today – the eagerness to see Jesus, the courage to dare the obstacles, and a heart burning with love so deep that nothing else can satisfy except an encounter with the Risen Lord.

The Resurrection of Christ is the foundation of our faith: St. Paul tells us: “If Christ has not been raised, our preaching is empty, and your faith comes to nothing. And we become false witnesses of God ... And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile, and you are still in sin ... If it is only for this life that we hope in Christ, we are the most unfortunate of all people” (1 Cor. 15: 14-15, 17-19). Without the Resurrection, we would not gather here, or rather our gathering would have been in vain and sheer waste of time. “But Christ has been truly raised from the dead, the first fruit of all who have fallen asleep” (1 Cor. 15: 20). Therefore, our faith in Christ has a living base, our hope is founded, and this hope does disappoint (Rom. 5: 5).

My dear friends, what does the resurrection mean for us then? It is the light that shatters the darkness of the grave; the power that breaks the chains that held us down; it is our victory over death and sin; it is our freedom from slavery; it is the key that opens the door of heaven. We must live in such a wise that these resonate in our lives. St. Paul exhorts us in the Second Reading (Col. 3: 1): “Since you have been brought back to true life in Christ, you must look for the things that are in heaven, where Christ is, sitting at God’s right hand” (Col. 3: 1).

HAPPY EASTER TO YOU ALL