

Easter Day - The Resurrection of the Lord

FIRST READING - *Acts 10:34a, 37-43*

Peter proceeded to speak and said: "You know what has happened all over Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached, how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power. He went about doing good and healing all those oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. We are witnesses of all that he did both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree. This man God raised on the third day and granted that he be visible, not to all the people, but to us, the witnesses chosen by God in advance, who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. He commissioned us to preach to the people and testify that he is the one appointed by God as judge of the living and the dead. To him all the prophets bear witness, that everyone who believes in him will receive forgiveness of sins through his name."

RESPONSORIAL PSALM - *Psalms 118:1-2, 16-17, 22-23 (24)*

R. This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad. or R. Alleluia.

SECOND READING - *Colossians 3:1-4*

Brothers and sisters: If then you were raised with Christ, seek what is above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Think of what is above, not of what is on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ your life appears, then you too will appear with him in glory.

GOSPEL - *Luke 24:13-35*

That very day, the first day of the week, two of Jesus' disciples were going to a village seven miles from Jerusalem called Emmaus, and they were conversing about all the things that had occurred. And it happened that while they were conversing and debating, Jesus himself drew near and walked with them, but their eyes were prevented from recognizing him. He asked them, "What are you discussing as you walk along?" They stopped, looking downcast. One of them, named Cleopas, said to him in reply, "Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know of the things that have taken place there in these days?" And he replied to them, "What sort of things?" They said to him, "The things that happened to Jesus the Nazarene, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, how our chief priests and rulers both handed him over to a sentence of death and crucified him. But we were hoping that he would be the one to redeem Israel; and besides all this, it is now the third day since this took place. Some women from our group, however, have astounded us: they were at the tomb early in the morning and did not find his body; they came back and reported that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who announced that he was alive. Then some of those with us went to the tomb and found things just as the women had described, but him they did not see." And he said to them, "Oh, how foolish you are! How slow of heart to believe all that the prophets spoke! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them what referred to him in all the Scriptures. As they approached the village to which they were going, he gave the impression that he was going on farther. But they urged him, "Stay with us, for it is nearly evening and the day is almost over." So he went in to stay with them. And it happened that, while he was with them at table, he took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them. With that their eyes were opened and they recognized him, but he vanished from their sight. Then they said to each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he spoke to us on the way and opened the Scriptures to us?" So they set out at once and returned to Jerusalem where they found gathered together the eleven and those with them who were saying, "The Lord has truly been raised and has appeared to Simon!" Then the two recounted what had taken place on the way and how he was made known to them in the breaking of bread.

Witness

Our Easter celebrations are at the heart of our faith and practice. We are a resurrection people. The resurrection of Jesus shifted the entire way of reflecting on the meaning of the life of Jesus. So much so, that the Gospels were essentially written backwards. Some of the disciples may have been taking notes, such as the apostle Matthew is presented in the 'Chosen' series. But even those notes would necessarily take on new and much deeper meaning. That Jesus the Rabbi had risen from the dead and was with God in glory, that really does change everything. Had Jesus not risen from the dead, there might have been those who gathered together his sayings / teachings and published them as 'good guides for a good life', alongside other guides. But, instead of what seemed at first to be tragedy, disaster and failure, the resurrection literally threw new light on his whole life, and especially the Passion and Death of Jesus leading to a very different understanding of what happened and was unfolding in their midst.

Because of the Resurrection, the disciples, who were at first paralyzed with fear, suddenly made a complete turnaround and began boldly to proclaim that Jesus, who died on the Cross, was alive and with them. And when, in fact, they were arrested, persecuted and imprisoned, it became a cause of rejoicing that they were now even more closely related to the life experience of their Lord, sharing in his sufferings and manifesting God's glory.

The Resurrection is the definitive watershed in human history and the history of religions; it makes Christianity absolutely unique. We have great thinkers, great builders, unsung and celebrated heroes, spiritual giants, and famous religious founders and leaders... but only about Jesus Christ can we say: *"He rose again on the third day, in fulfillment of the scriptures."* Only in Christ's resurrection are human beings able to realize their supernatural vocation. Only now are we able to have victory over slavery to sin and live abundant life in Christ. In Christ and in his resurrection a wildly new hope dawns for all mankind, love is proven to be stronger than death. No one else offers such a hope.

This faith, a gift the children of God receive, is like the flame of the Easter Candle on the Easter Vigil. It starts small, burning brightly in the darkness. Then it spreads to another candle, and another. But the ceremony of light never stops when our own candles have been lit. We always turn to someone around us whose candle is cold and dark, and we light it with the flame of our candle.

The theme of today's Mass about witness. In the First Reading, Peter speaks about his own experience and shares that experience with the listening crowds. For the disciple of Jesus, there is a close and indivisible relationship between experiencing and proclaiming. Because of Peter's experience of knowing with utter conviction that Jesus, who died on the Cross, is now alive, he is so filled with joy that he must share that joy with others—so that it can be theirs, too.

Peter emphasizes the importance of Jesus' disciples not only experiencing the joy of their Risen Master and Lord, but also of sharing that experience and joy with as many people as possible. This is why we are called missionary disciples. Sharing the 'Good News' is something we must also do. Not to share our Easter joy and what it means to us, ought to be unthinkable. Peter challenges us to attach ourselves totally to the Way of Jesus, the way of Truth and Life, which brings about reconciliation with God and with others. It is to bring freedom, justice and peace into our world, and prepare us for the day when we all experience complete unity in our Creator God, Trinity of persons.

We find a similar theme in the Second Reading and the Gospel. St. Paul had had a sudden and transformative experience of the Risen Christ who revealed himself while on his way to Damascus. The disciples on the way to Emmaus were also made to recognize, by the risen Christ who walks them through salvation history, that the positive meaning of his sufferings is found in the Hebrew Testament. Those experiences gave them a totally new vision of things and especially of the meaning of Jesus' life and

message. For the rest of St. Paul's life, he used all his energies, the same energies he once used against Christians, to help others—Jews and non-Jews alike—to know Christ, to love as Christ, to live like Christ and to lead others to Christ.

They were all witnesses who gave testimony. Peter, all the apostles, the gospel writers were witnesses and needed other witnesses. Paul needed witnesses. We need and are witnesses. Think about how fast good news spreads. Christianity spread because Christians told their story. In our own time, people will come to find their joy in Christ if we tell our own story about finding that joy.

- If I really believe that Jesus died for me and for each person, don't I want to tell others?
- If I really believe that Jesus rose from the dead on Easter, don't I want to tell others?
- If I really believe that Jesus is alive, and that he wants to fill our lives with healing and freedom and joy, don't I want to tell others?

Someone else is waiting to hear that story. Someone else is waiting to experience the joy of Easter.

Key Themes for Reflection:

- **The Significance of the Resurrection:** Understand why the Resurrection is the central tenet of Christian faith and its impact on the understanding of Jesus' life and teachings.
- **Witness and Proclamation:** Explore the role of eyewitnesses in the early Church and the call for believers to share their faith and the "Good News."
- **Transformation and New Life:** Analyze how the Resurrection brought about a radical transformation in the disciples and offers a new hope and way of life for all believers.
- **Fulfillment of Scripture:** Recognize how the Resurrection is seen as the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies.
- **Encountering the Risen Christ:** Examine the different ways individuals encountered the resurrected Jesus and the impact of these encounters.

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Resurrection:** The central Christian belief that Jesus Christ rose from the dead on the third day after his crucifixion, signifying his victory over sin and death.
- **Anointing:** The act of consecrating someone or something with oil, often signifying divine favor or appointment for a specific role, as in Jesus' anointing with the Holy Spirit.
- **Witness:** Someone who has seen or experienced an event and can testify to its truth. In the context of the readings, refers to those who encountered the risen Christ and proclaimed this reality.
- **Proclamation:** The act of publicly and boldly announcing a message, especially the "Good News" of Jesus Christ and his Resurrection.
- **Salvation History:** The story of God's saving actions throughout history, culminating in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.
- **Redemption:** The act of saving or setting free from sin, evil, or captivity. In Christian theology, Jesus' death and resurrection are seen as the means of humanity's redemption.
- **Supernatural Vocation:** The calling from God for human beings to share in his divine life and glory, made possible through Christ's Resurrection.
- **Missionary Disciples:** Followers of Jesus Christ who are called to share the "Good News" of their faith with others and invite them to become disciples as well.
- **Eucharist (Breaking of Bread):** The Christian ritual, rooted in Jesus' Last Supper, where bread and wine are consecrated and consumed as the body and blood of Christ, often seen as a way to encounter the risen Lord.
- **The Way:** An early term used to refer to the Christian faith