

Sunday, April 12, 2020

Easter Sunday

Meditation and Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion

Mass Readings:

1st Reading: Acts 10:34, 37-43

2nd Reading: Colossians 3:1-4

Responsorial: Psalm 118:1-2, 16-17, 22-23

Gospel: John 20:1-9

Having a Personal Encounter with the Risen Lord during this Easter Season

They did not yet understand. (John 20:9)

Happy Easter! Christ is risen! Sin is defeated, and death has lost its sting! The long years of waiting and hoping have finally come to an end.

You would think that the Gospel reading for today would reflect all the joy embedded in these truths. But that's not what we hear. Rather, we hear a tale of panic, misunderstanding, and incomplete faith. Mary Magdalene thinks Jesus' corpse has been stolen. Peter is stunned by the empty tomb. And John? He begins to believe, but he still leaves the scene unsatisfied. Where is the joy? What about the victory that Jesus has promised?

It's on the threshold, just about to break through. One more thing still had to happen. The disciples still have to meet the risen Lord.

Over the next few days at Mass, we'll see Mary Magdalene, the apostles, the Emmaus disciples, and Peter all have personal encounters with Jesus. And when they do—that's when the joy comes in.

Today at Mass, we will sing "Alleluia" before the Gospel reading. And we will hear how "on this day . . . above all" it is right and just to praise Jesus "more gloriously" than at any other time of the year (Preface I of Easter). But don't limit your rejoicing based on your having heard the good news proclaimed in the Gospel. Instead, imagine how great, how deep, and how glorious your rejoicing will be as you come to meet the risen Lord in Holy Communion. Imagine what will happen as you come seeking a personal encounter with him, an encounter with his love and grace.

Christ is risen—for you. He has overcome sin—for you. He has opened heaven—for you. Take hold of these gifts by taking hold of Jesus. Then watch as your heart is filled with joy.

"Lord, I don't want to be satisfied with just hearing about you. On this day above all others, let me meet you."

(Many thanks to *The Word Among Us* (www.wau.org) for allowing us to use meditations from their monthly devotional magazine. Used with permission.)

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Questions for Reflection or Discussion:

1. In the first reading from Acts, Peter says that, *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.* It ends with these words: *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.*
 - Why do you think it was necessary that “God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power”?
 - Do you believe that through faith, and the sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation, you also have been anointed with the Holy Spirit and power? Why or why not?
 - If you do believe this, then in what way do you also believe that you are called to go *about doing good and healing all those oppressed by the devil* and to *bear witness*? What prevents you from doing this?
2. The responsorial psalm also speaks of the power of the Lord: *Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, for his mercy endures forever. Let the house of Israel say, “His mercy endures forever. The right hand of the Lord has struck with power; the right hand of the Lord is exalted. I shall not die, but live and declare the works of the Lord.” The stone which the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. By the Lord has this been done; it is wonderful in our eyes.*
 - The psalm reminds us that *The right hand of the Lord has struck with power; the right hand of the Lord is exalted. I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord.*” What do these words mean to you?
 - How would you describe what the *works of the Lord* are?
 - In what ways has the Lord given you the power to declare these *works of the Lord* to others? When you have done this, what impact did it have on the other person?
3. In the second reading, we hear these startling words, *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.*
 - What do you think is the meaning of these opening words of the reading: *If then you were raised with Christ*?
 - What about the meaning of the following words? *For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ. When Christ your life appears, then you too will appear with him in glory.*
 - How can you allow the truth of these words, and others in the reading, to impact how you live out your day, especially when faced with temptations or difficult circumstances?
4. The Gospel reading describes reactions of Mary Magdalene, and the Apostles Peter and John, to the resurrection of Jesus: *She ran and went to Simon Peter and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and told them, “They have taken the Lord from the tomb, and we don’t know where they put him.” Peter and the other disciple went out and came to the tomb. ... When Simon Peter arrived after him, he went into the tomb ... Then the other disciple also went in, the one who had arrived at the tomb first, and he saw and believed. For they did not yet understand the Scripture that he had to rise from the dead.*
 - Why do you think Mary Magdalene and John and Peter reacted the way they did?
 - Why do you think John *saw and believed* without any real understanding of the resurrection of Christ?
 - How would you describe your own belief in the resurrection of Christ? What impact has this belief had on how you live each day? In what ways have you experienced the new life that Jesus came to give?
5. The meditation is opens with these words: “Happy Easter! Christ is risen! Sin is defeated, and death has lost its sting! ... You would think that the Gospel reading for today would reflect all the joy embedded in these truths. ... Rather, we hear a tale of panic, misunderstanding, and incomplete faith. ... The disciples still have to *meet* the risen Lord.” It closes with these words: “Christ is risen—*for you*. He has overcome sin—*for you*. He has opened heaven—*for you*. Take hold of these gifts by taking hold of Jesus. Then watch as your heart is filled with joy.”
 - Why do you think that the one additional thing that had to happen, to fully end the doubts of Peter and John, was that they would “still have to *meet* the risen Lord”?
 - In what ways do you believe that, “Christ is risen—*for you*. He has overcome sin—*for you*. He has opened heaven—*for you*”? Is the result of this that “*your heart is filled with joy*”?

Take some time now and pray and ask the Lord that as you celebrate the resurrection of Jesus, you would have a personal encounter with the risen Lord. Use the prayer below from the end of the meditation as the starting point.

“Lord, I don’t want to be satisfied with just hearing about you. On this day above all others, let me meet you.”

[The discussion questions were created by Maurice Blumberg, who is currently a member of the board of directors of the ChristLife Catholic Ministry for Evangelization (www.christlife.org), a member of the National Service Committee Council of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal (www.nsc-chariscenter.org), and a board member of The Love of Christ Foundation. Prior to this, Maurice was the founding executive director of the National fellowship of Catholic Men, a chairman of the board of *The Word Among Us* (www.wau.org), and a director of partner relations for The Word Among Us Partners ministry. He can be contacted at mblumberg@wau.org or mblumberg@aol.com.]

“Jesus, you have conquered death! You live and are always at my side! Help this reality sink into the core of my being. Show me one new step, however small, that I can take today to ‘declare the works of the Lord’ by my life and words (Psalm 118:17).”

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