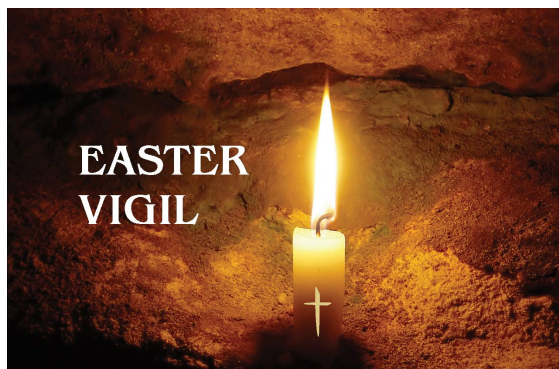


LOOKING AT LIFE THROUGH THE LENS OF THE GOSPEL



EASTER VIGIL

16th April 2022

⁵⁵ The women who had come with Jesus from Galilee followed, and they saw the tomb and how his body was laid. ⁵⁶ Then they returned, and prepared spices and ointments. On the sabbath they rested according to the commandment.

Luke 24:1 But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb, taking the spices that they had prepared. ² They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, ³ but when they went in, they did not find the body. ⁴ While they were perplexed about this, suddenly two men in dazzling clothes stood beside them. ⁵ The women were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, “Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen. ⁶ Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, ⁷ that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again.” ⁸ Then they remembered his words, ⁹ and returning from the tomb, they told all this to the eleven and to all the rest. ¹⁰ Now it was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them who told this to the apostles. ¹¹ But these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them. ¹² But Peter got up and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen

General Comments—Michel de Verteuil

The resurrection of Jesus which we celebrate on this night is the universal story of God’s grace triumphing over evil. Meditating on the biblical texts ahead of the liturgical celebration will help us enter personally into the mystery.

Each of the four gospels tells its own story of how the women discovered that Jesus was risen from the dead. Our meditation must always be based on the text we have before us. Being conscious of what is proper to the author often helps us to read the passage as if for the first time.

St Luke’s account, which we read this year, has its own sequence of events. He says that the women discovered first that the body of Jesus was not there; as they were standing there, the angels (two, not one as in Matthew and Mark) announced to them the good news of the resurrection.

Only St Luke includes the words of the angel which express very dramatically the mystery of the resurrection as it is always experienced, “Why look among the dead for someone who is alive?”

St Luke generally gives more importance to the role of women than the other evangelists. It is significant then that in his account the women are not told by the angels to bring the good news to the eleven; they do so of their own accord.

In verses 11 and 12 he highlights the incredulity of the eleven, with a hint that this was “an old wives’ tale”. As always in St Luke, the lowly are raised up while the mighty are cast down from their thrones (1:52).

Lord, we thank you for resurrection moments
- we had given up hope that we would ever be reconciled with a friend,
when all of a sudden we were relating as before;
- one morning a loved one gave up drink or drugs;
- a dying friend who had long refused to see a priest asked to do so;
- opposite sides in a dispute started to negotiate.
We remember how when we understood that the large stone
Which was blocking new life was now rolled away,
We were like the women at the tomb of Jesus,
We stood there not knowing what to think.
It was all so unexpected that we dared not raise our eyes in case it was not true.
Only gradually we understood that we were looking among the dead
For someone who was alive.
We remembered the words we had been told many years before,
That sooner or later we all have to be handed over into the power of evil,
To be crucified and rise again on the third day.
Thank you, Lord.

Michel de Verteuil

POINTERS FOR PRAYER

1. You might identify with the women through the events of that morning. They came search and found an empty tomb. Then they were told they were looking in the wrong place: "why look for the living among the dead". Finally they had to cope with the staggering good news that Jesus was alive when they thought he was dead. Let their story remind you of your journey when you found life again where you thought there was none – perhaps you discovered that you had been looking in the wrong place.
2. The women were the first witnesses to the resurrection. Remember the women in your life who have brought you good news, and the women who have been witnesses to you bringing you to faith in yourself, in others, or in God.
3. The women did not keep their discovery to themselves but hastened to share the good news with the apostles. Have there been times when your heart has been full of good news that you were eager to share with others.

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What happened to make Jesus' disciples believe something so amazing had happened? What caused the radical turnaround in these disciples, who had given him up as a lost cause just a few days earlier?

The stories that have come down to us do not provide a clear basis for understanding just what happened after Jesus' death. We cannot penetrate the meaning of their experience by using historical methods. It is clear however, that the faith of his followers did not come out of nowhere. Something happened to them. Indeed the apostolic preaching, with all its enthusiasm and audacity, would be unthinkable unless the witnesses were in real contact with the totally new and unexpected event that had happened to them, that is the manifestation of the risen Christ and the fact that he had spoken with them. All the sources tell us that what they went through not only revived their faith in Jesus, but opened them to a new and surprising experience of his presence in their midst.

The core of the appearance stories is a personal encounter with Jesus full of life.

That is the key: **JESUS LIVES AND IS WITH THEM AGAIN.**

This encounter with Jesus is a gift. The disciples don't take the initiative; Jesus does. It is a grace from God. This encounter transforms them to their very roots. Once more Jesus offers them his trust; their disloyalty has been cured by forgiveness and they can begin a new life. The encounter with the risen one has to be communicated and shared with others. They feel 'sent' by Jesus. All those who met the risen Christ feel the call to share their own experience with others.

José A Pagola: JESUS - AN HISTORICAL APPROXIMATION

