

Easter – Easter Day 2024

Acts 10:34. 37-43; Ps 117; Colossians 3:1-4; John 20:1-9

Today is the day of light for the world. Today is the day when we have our eyes opened and we see as we are supposed to see. Today we don't merely see what we are supposed to see, Christ risen from the dead, but we see everything – the whole of creation, – with renewed sight: we see the world *through* the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Mary of Magdala reached the tomb in which the body of Jesus has been laid after his crucifixion. She saw that the stone which sealed the entrance had been rolled away. We are not told that she looked inside the tomb, just that upon seeing the great rock moved away she ran to the two disciples and exclaims: '*They have taken the Lord out of the tomb*'.¹ Maybe in her great agitation she has jumped to this reasonable assumption. Why else would it have been moved?

Responding to Mary Magdala's cry, Peter and the other Disciple run to the tomb. Peter goes into the tomb, he sees that there is no body there. He sees the linen cloths on the ground and the cloth that had been over his head, but he does not know what to make of it. The beloved disciple goes in after lingering at the entrance and '*he saw and he believed*'² and later he writes it down it so that we too may believe. What did he believe?

¹ John 20: 2

² John 20:9

³ Today there are theologians and intellectuals and no doubt even Priests and lay people who believe that even if the body of Jesus had been present in the tomb and corrupt there could still have been

It is striking that although Jesus' death is very public, his resurrection is really quite private. No one actually witnesses it; the women and the disciples only find the empty tomb. All four gospels are unanimous in this. The body of Jesus is not present where it was placed and it confounds them and frightens them. That Jesus is once again alive is really not an obvious conclusion for anyone who saw what had happened to him on the cross.³

It is because there was no body to be found that the disciples could come to the conclusion, sooner or later, that Jesus who was dead was no longer dead. It is this testimony of the empty grave which fills a critical gap in understanding for those who were to meet Jesus after his death: in the upper room in Jerusalem, on the road to Emmaus, by the Sea of Tiberias, and on the Road to Damascus. As Pope Benedict the XVIth pointed out in this book '*Jesus of Nazareth*' it is only an event which was so utterly compelling, one of '*extraordinary impact*', which would have convinced faithful Jews to move the Sabbath – whose sanctity was enshrined in the 10 commandments - from the Saturday to the Sunday, an event as enormous as the Resurrection.⁴

Why then was the Lord's Resurrection so underplayed, when his death was acted out before a large audience? Perhaps the most compelling reason why human eyes are excluded from the actual event of the Resurrection is to protect us from the natural impulse to fixate on the act of the Resurrection itself, rather than what it means and gives.

a resurrection, a resurrection of the Spirit. After all is not God spirit, and did not Jesus come to point us to a spiritual life? But this would not have been a possible thought for our Lord's followers.

⁴ Pope Benedict XVI , '*Jesus of Nazareth: Holy Week*' (CTS) p259

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But it also has, I believe, to do with the use of power. God let his Son die before the world so that no one could reasonably deny it. But his Resurrection is not forced on us, we are asked to accept it based on the witnesses we have been given, their credibility and the change that the Resurrected Lord wrought in his disciples' hearts and the changes he has wrought in the lives of countless men and women down through the ages. And in our hearts. That is the most credible witness.

Our faith is the faith of Mary Magdala and Peter, who run from the tomb, or look into it and try to understand. Our faith is the gift of witness of the disciple who '*saw and believed*'. Our faith is the faith of that of the disciples who saw, spoke and ate with the risen Lord after they had seen him die. Our hope is this: that Jesus is faithful to his invitation to us that we may share in his Resurrection through our recommitment to our Baptism this Easter. It is through this lense that we are called to see the world.