

Sunday of the Resurrection (31.3.2024)

Dawn the next day found Mary again on her way to the tomb, where she discovered that Jesus' body had disappeared. "They have taken my Lord," she says in horror, "and I don't know where they have put him."

After all that Mary has experienced, she still calls Jesus her Lord. When our fantasies don't come true, we often react by getting angry or falling into lethargy. But Mary Magdalene was persistent in her worship, just as she was persistent when she put perfumed ointment on Jesus' feet and washed them with her tears, and just as she was persistent when she supported Jesus' ministry out of her own resources. And so it was Mary Magdalene who first encountered the risen Jesus on Easter morning.

It is incredible and disarming ... He is the Beginning and the End of all things, the creator of the spinning planets, the one whose resurrection announces a new forgiveness. The earth trembles, the angels sing chants, but He Himself is mistaken for a simple, bewildered gardener with dirt under his fingernails, just beginning a new day at work ... What a simple meeting, in a simple setting, on a simple day, no important people here, just an ordinary woman with extraordinary faithfulness that goes beyond the grave. She is the first witness of the resurrection! The first to see the risen Lord!

The resurrection changes everything. It turns things upside down. It heals. It sheds new light on our lives. It puts our lives in a different context. It gives us meaning. Opens up a new life. It brings hope. Peter writes about this hope in one of his letters. 1 Peter 1:3-7.

He gave us new life

If Peter speaks of a new life, it means that there is another life - the old life - and it belongs to the past. Just yesterday, Jesus' friends were drowning in sorrow and pain, experiencing confusion - not understanding what was going on in their lives, falling into deep doubt about the existence of God, or collapsing under the weight of guilt. But today, all this is a thing of the past, because the "resurrection" opens the way to another life - a new life.

I don't know what that looks like in your life. Maybe you're content and not lacking anything ... but maybe you know it - sadness, confusion, doubt, emptiness or guilt and disappointment over your own actions. All you need is to "see the Lord (again)", to meet Him in person, to confess Him as Lord, to let Him into your sadness, pain, confusion, doubt and failure. He is alive, his presence is powerful and transforming, giving him space to be with you every day.

This life is eternal

That moment when Mary Magdalene saw the risen Jesus with her own eyes changes the perspective of her life in a profound way. From that moment on, she will never think of her life as she did before. Before, she had thought that life ended at death. You just have, at best, 80-85 years of life and then it's all over. As she runs to the disciples to tell them that she has "seen the Lord," this way of thinking becomes a distant thing of the past. Never again, will she judge any day, any hour or minute of her life, any situation, any difficulty, worry or joy through the eyes of one whose life will be over in a few decades, but through the eyes of one whose life is eternal.

God has not called us to the hope we find here on earth. Don't look for it here on earth, that hope is ready in heaven, ask for it there, orient yourself there. He has called us to a living, undying hope. Change your perspective and will your sorrows, pains, confusions, doubts and failures be transformed? How? You need to "See (again) the risen Lord! Enter into His presence, let Him speak and work in you changes of thought and action.

Until it all comes to fulfillment, the power of God is protecting us

What about until then? "The power of God through faith saves us." God is ready to give you everything you need to stand. Difficulties are a part of our lives, they may not just go away, but you can stand - and God will protect you to do so. He doesn't say, "You will never again experience suffering, sorrow, pain, doubt..." but He will help you to stand. In trials, we focus on solving them; God focuses on growing our faith.

So three things happened when God raised Jesus, count on them:

1. He gave us new life;
2. that life is eternal;
3. and God's power is great enough to protect us through faith.

Amen.

Questions for reflection:

It is worth noticing how many times Jesus introduces himself to people after his resurrection by asking them questions. Good Friday left a mess in its wake, and Jesus systematically addresses the effects of that mess in the lives of his friends by making them respond to his presence.

- Mary Magdalene asks, "Why are you weeping, woman?" John 20:13 to help her cope with her pain.
- To two men he met on the road to Emmaus he asks, "What are you discussing?" Luke 24:17-25, then to open the Scriptures and help her cope with her confusion.
- He asks the disciples, "Why are you so frightened?" Lk 24:38 and gives them a taste of his own tangible presence to help them deal with their doubts.
- Peter asks, "Do you love me?" John 21:15 to help him come to terms with his guilt.

What question do you need to hear?