

12<sup>th</sup> April 2020 (Easter Sunday, Year A)

Acts 10:34,37-43; Psalm 117(118):1-2,16-17,22-23; Colossians 3:1-4; John 20:1-9.

**'... He saw and he believed.'**

Today's gospel reading starts before the dawn of the new day; it was still dark when Mary of Magdala runs to the tomb on her own. In the gospel according to John, light and darkness reflect on the person's state of faith. At this stage Mary was still in the dark, she still failed to understand 'the teaching of scripture, that Jesus must rise from the dead!' She goes to the tomb to sit there, keeping vigil at the tomb of her crucified Lord.

On arrival she is faced with an empty tomb! As she is still in the dark about what happened, the only logical conclusion she can come to is that 'they have stolen the body of Jesus!' This is very distressing news. We find consolation in visiting the tombs of loved ones to grieve their loss. This new piece of information means that the disciples cannot even come together at the tomb of their beloved Lord! Mary goes running to tell Peter and the other disciple – the one Jesus loved.

The unnamed beloved disciple stands for each one of us. We are the disciple specially loved by Jesus. The gospel according to John leaves a blank space in the scene where we can place ourselves. Where do I stand in this story? Mary, Peter and the other disciple need to make a journey of faith. They need to move from the darkness of unbelief into the light of faith. This gospel reading invites me to join in that journey. Where do I stand?

In disbelief at the news brought to them by Mary, the two disciples run to the tomb. The other disciple, the one loved by Jesus, arrives first. Love is certainly present in his heart, he cannot wait to see what happened to his Master. When Peter arrives they both get into the tomb. What they see is very important; the burial cloths that once bound Jesus are now empty, thrown to one side. Moreover, the cloth that covered his face was neatly rolled up and put in a place by itself.

This is a very important detail. In order to respond to this new Christian Jewish sect, the Jewish leaders were saying that 'the gardener' or the disciples had stolen the body of Jesus, and that was why he was not in the tomb. Peter and John note that if thieves had stolen the body, they would not have unwrapped him before running away. Thieves usually work in a hurry and have no time to leave things neatly behind. They are afraid of being caught. So, this is certainly not the work of robbers.

Moreover, when Lazarus was called back to life, a gospel we read two weeks ago, he walked out of the tomb still wrapped in his burial clothes and with the cloth covering his face. Lazarus was still bound by his mortal reality. He had to die a second time. Jesus' resurrection is different. Jesus now lives in a glorious risen body and will never die again. The burial cloths are left behind as he will never need them again!

This is when the light comes on for the beloved disciple. He saw this and believed. He believed that Jesus had risen! His journey of faith is complete.

Journeying in faith is not easy. The disciples had the opportunity to see the empty tomb and the discarded burial cloths. Later on, they experience the encounter with the risen Jesus himself. This is what they witness to. It is interesting that the beloved disciple believed before he met the risen Jesus in the body.

Unlike the disciples, we will not have the opportunity to meet Jesus physically in this world. Our journey of faith needs to be based on our reading and understanding of scripture. We need to base our faith on the witness given to us by the disciples and who wrote about it. Like the beloved disciples, we too are invited to see and believe even before we meet the Christ personally. Later on Jesus will declare: 'blessed are they who do not see, and yet believe!'

This Easter, am I ready to renew my faith in Christ who is risen? Easter is a time when I renew my Baptism commitment. Am I ready for this? Have I moved from the darkness of lack of faith to the

bright light of belief? The best tool to help me in the journey is read and meditate the word of God. I too need to run to the tomb of the Master who loves me above all things. I am beloved by God and I need to find time to sit at the empty tomb and renew my faith.

For many of us this Easter is providing us with time to reflect, as we spend time on our own, away from our family and friends. Let us find more time to sit in the light of our God; with the beloved disciple let us see and believe!

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