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Meditations: Easter Monday

Some reflections that can assist our prayer on Easter Monday.

01/04/2024

- The Risen Jesus comes to meet the women
- The holy women become apostles
- The courage that comes from encountering the risen Christ

“THE LORD has risen from the dead as he said; let us all exult and rejoice, for he reigns for all eternity,

alleluia.” In today’s Entrance Antiphon, the Church invites all of us to join in this exclamation of joy. Easter Sunday is a mystery so immense that the liturgy devotes “not only one day – that would be too little for such great joy,”^[1] but a whole week, the Octave of Easter. These eight days are, as it were, one great Sunday, because it is impossible to contain in twenty-four hours the joy of knowing that Jesus, with his glorious wounds, is alive and is saying to us: “Who will fight against me? I am the one who has conquered death, put the enemy in chains, trampled down hell, tied up the strong, and raised man to the highest heavens; for indeed I am Christ.”^[2] —

The women who followed Christ had gone, impelled by love, to “visit” the tomb of their Lord. But they return back home at once, running, to tell the others what has happened. They have found the tomb empty and have

met with Jesus. He is alive! The women *departed quickly from the tomb*, the Gospel tells us, *with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples* (Mt 28:8). He is the same Christ, risen from the dead, who comes to meet them and confirms in them their apostolic resolution: *Go and tell my brethren to go to Galilee, and there they will see me* (Mt 28:10).

Their hearts are filled with a sudden joy, together with a certain confusion, because it isn't easy to forget the scenes of the Passion. They don't question what they have seen; they have no doubt that it was Jesus who met them on their way, with his unmistakable look and tone of voice. "After the rites of the Easter Triduum, which have allowed us to relive the mystery of the death and Resurrection of our Lord, with eyes of faith we now contemplate him Risen and alive. We too are called to encounter him personally and to

become his proclaimers and witnesses.”^[3] —

MARY MAGDALEN and the other women following Jesus are charged with giving the news to the apostles. Jesus entrusts to them the first announcement of the Resurrection; they will be “the first witnesses of this truth. Perhaps He wanted to reward their finesse, their sensitivity to his message, their courage that had led them to Calvary.”^[4] — The hearts of these women burn with intense love for Jesus and hence they refuse to be separated from the tomb. Mary Magdalen “was looking for the One she hadn’t found; she cried while looking for Him, enkindled with the fire of her love. Therefore,” Saint Gregory continues, “she was the only one to see Him then, since she had remained to look for Him. For it is perseverance that gives effectiveness to good works.”^[5] — Those women become apostles of

apostles. They will spur the disciples to leave their hiding place and go in search of our Lord

The strength of their witness springs from their sincere love for the Master. The driving force of evangelisation in the Church has always been charity. We see this in the lives of the saints who, impelled by the fire of their love for our Lord, have proclaimed Him fearlessly. Just as rivers overflow their banks in spring and make the fields more fertile, so “apostolate is love for God that overflows and communicates itself to others. The interior life implies growth in union with Christ in the Bread and in the Word. And apostolate is the precise and necessary outward manifestation of interior life. When one tastes the love of God one feels ‘burdened’ with the weight of souls ... For a Christian, apostolate is something instinctive. It is not something added onto their

daily activities and professional work from the outside.”^[6]

We know that our Lord is alive and that He loves us; this is the great news which fills our life with hope. Hence we want many people to share in this joy. Jesus himself comes to meet us in order to strengthen this longing in us, transforming it into the mission of his disciples down through history: *Go therefore and make disciples of all nations* (Mt 28:19). He seems to be telling each of us: With your life, with your words, with your friendship, you too can communicate to your fellow men and women the great news that life is stronger than death, and love is stronger than hatred.

IN CONTRAST to the holy women, the guards watching over the tomb, on discovering it was empty, were filled with terror. They thought that someone had stolen the body, and

didn't know how to explain what had happened. They were afraid because they realised their lives were in danger as they entered the city to report the news to the Jewish authorities. The high priests and elders bought their silence with a large sum of money, while assuring them they would be protected if Pilate discovered their negligence.

While courage is reborn in the women on discovering that Christ is alive, the authorities speak about a dead man they are afraid of. While the holy women leave the tomb filled with joy to share the news with the others, the soldiers flee from it intent on hiding what has happened. The women regain their peace, while the soldiers succumb to fear and lies.

“The Risen One also repeats to us today, as to these women, not to be afraid to become messengers of the proclamation of his Resurrection. Those who encounter the Risen Jesus

and entrust themselves docilely to him have nothing to fear. This is the message that Christians are called to spread to the very ends of the earth.”^[7] In our daily lives, “there are so many opportunities to proclaim this faith of ours to others, simply and with conviction, so that from our encounter their faith can grow. And it is more urgent than ever that the men and women of our age come to know and encounter Jesus. And, also thanks to our example, allow themselves to be won over by Him.”^[8]

Enveloped in pascal joy, we can invoke Mary to help us become witnesses to Christ’s love, to be messengers of the hope that He has won for us with his victory.

^[1] Benedict XVI, *Regina coeli*, 9 April 2007.

^[2] Melito of Sardis, Homily on Easter (Office of Readings).

[3] Francis, *Regina coeli*, 22 April 2019.

[4] Saint John Paul II, General Audience, 22 February 1989.

[5] Saint Gregory the Great, Homily 25, 1-2. 4-5.

[6] Saint Josemaría, *Christ Is Passing By*, no. 122.

[7] Benedict XVI, *Regina Coeli*, 9 April 2007.

[8] Ibid.