

Meditations: Easter Sunday

Some reflections that can enrich our prayer on Easter Sunday.

- The Resurrection rekindles the holy women's love
- Peter and John run to the tomb
- Close to Mary in the joy of the Resurrection

THE SUN RISES in Jerusalem. The night's darkness slowly gives way as the first rays illumine the city walls, the Temple, the fortress towers... Mary Magdalen and several other women leave the city and begin

walking towards the northwest, towards Calvary. The streets are empty. Their hearts are heavy, saddened that Jesus' death has darkened the whole earth forever. The sun no longer seems to shine as it did when the Master was with them. But they aren't deterred by the darkness, nor by the guards posted in front of the tomb by the Sanhedrin, nor by the fact that Jesus has been dead for three days now. They don't know who will roll away the stone sealing the tomb for them, but they refuse to remain shut up at home. Once again they pass by the places where Jesus used to walk. And once again their hearts tremble at the thought of all that has happened. But they refuse to give in to fear.

“The faith of these women really moves me,” said Saint Josemaría in an Easter meditation. “And it reminds me of so many good things about my mother, as you will also be

recalling many wonderful details about yours ... The women knew about the soldiers posted there. They knew that the tomb was completely shut. But they spent their money to buy the oil anyway, and shortly before sunrise they went to anoint the dead body of our Lord. They needed a lot of courage! When they reached the tomb, they saw that the stone had been rolled back (cf. *Mk* 16:4). This always happens. When we decide to do what we have to do, difficulties are easily overcome.”^[1]

We ask them to help us have a love for our Lord as strong as theirs, stronger than the unspeakable suffering of the Passion. In the hearts of these women, the fire that Christ himself kindled has not been totally extinguished. They have risen very early, and not in vain. God cannot resist such love and He gives them the best news of all, the definitive news in which all the prophecies are

fulfilled: “I have risen and am still with you,” he says to each of us. “My hand upholds you. Wherever you may fall, you will always fall into my hands. I am present even at the door of death. Where no one can accompany you further, and where you can bring nothing, even there I am waiting for you, and for you I will change darkness into light.”^[2]—

THEY HASTEN WITH JOY, although still perplexed, to the Cenacle to announce to the apostles what they have seen. But when the apostles listen to the message the women bring, still breathing deeply from their haste, it seems madness to them. Their words are accompanied by tears and expressions of joy. But Peter and John want to know everything possible about the Master, even though they aren’t convinced by the women’s words. So *they both ran, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb*

first (Jn 20:4). We want to run with them and even overtake John. What if what the women are saying is true? What if Jesus has fulfilled his promise? As they run towards the tomb in the early morning light, hope begins to grow in the hearts of these two apostles.

We can turn our eyes to Saint Peter for a moment: “He didn’t remain sedentary, in thought; he didn’t stay at home as the others did. He didn’t succumb to the somber atmosphere of those days, nor was he overwhelmed by his doubts. He wasn’t consumed by remorse, fear, or the continual gossip that leads nowhere. He was looking for Jesus, not for himself. This marked the beginning of Peter’s resurrection, the resurrection of his heart. Without giving in to sadness or darkness, he made room for hope: he allowed God’s light to enter into his heart, without smothering it.”^[3]

Even though, like Peter, we have sometimes denied Jesus, also like Peter we want to return to Him.

“Now is the time to make a change, my children” Saint Josemaría said in an Easter Sunday meditation.

“Holiness means being reborn every day. Don’t let your mistakes get you down, as long as you have good will and begin again each time. Take all your failings, all those obstacles on the path, and place them at Christ’s feet, so that he will be raised on high and triumph – and you will triumph along with him. Don’t let anything bother you: rectify your intention; begin again, try again and again. And in the end, if you can’t manage it, our Lord will come and help you to leap over the hurdle, the hurdle of holiness. This is the way to renew ourselves, to overcome ourselves: a daily ‘resurrection,’ with the certainty that we will make it to the end of our path, where love awaits us.”^[4]

MARY, THE MOTHER OF JESUS, didn't go to the tomb that morning. She remained at home, perhaps with a smile on her face. No one, except for Mary, has really grasped God the Father's plan: *for as yet they did not know the scripture, that he must rise from the dead (Jn 20:9)*. Mary was accustomed to keeping Jesus' words in her heart. After that Friday of suffering, her thoughts had been focused on the wonders that Jesus had said and done. Perhaps she would call to mind those mysterious words He had uttered about his resurrection on the third day. Nothing her Son might do could surprise her.

For us, more than two thousand years after these events took place, Good Friday and Jesus' Resurrection continue to give strength and meaning to our own lives. Therefore, "the events of this world are only as important as we make them. If we

are immersed in God nothing will disturb our interior peace. When, out of weakness, we make a big deal out of these insignificant events and let them get us down, it's because we want to. Close beside our Lord, we feel secure. If we unite ourselves to Christ's Cross, to his glorious Resurrection and the fire of Pentecost, there is no obstacle we cannot overcome.”^[5]

Saint Josemaría liked to stay very close to our Lady, especially during these days of paschal joy, “always safe and secure in the victory won for us by Christ through his Resurrection.”^[6] When we pray the *Regina Cœli* we can often make our Lady smile, with a holy pride in us who are her “newborn” children, renewed by Easter. “Rejoice and be glad, O Virgin Mary,” we will say to her, with the eagerness of sharing in her joy, knowing that Jesus will now remain with us forever,

^[1] Saint Josemaría, Meditation, 29 March 1959.

^[2] Benedict XVI, Homily, 7 April 2007.

^[3] Francis, Homily, 26 March 2016

^[4] Saint Josemaría, Meditation, 29 March 1959.

^[5] Ibid.

^[6] Ibid.