

4. April 2021

Sunday of Easter
“The empty tomb”

Jn 20:1-9

It was very early on the first day of the week and still dark, when Mary of Magdala came to the tomb. She saw that the stone had been moved away from the tomb and came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved. 'They have taken the Lord out of the tomb,' she said, 'and we don't know where they have put him.' So Peter set out with the other disciple to go to the tomb. They ran together, but the other disciple, running faster than Peter, reached the tomb first; he bent down and saw the linen cloths lying on the ground, but did not go in. Simon Peter, following him, also came up, went into the tomb, saw the linen cloths lying on the ground and also the cloth that had been over his head; this was not with the linen cloths but rolled up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple who had reached the tomb first also went in; he saw and he believed. Till this moment they had still not understood the scripture, that he must rise from the dead.

How essential is the report on the resurrection of the Lord, all the details are also important. This is less important for the faithful who firmly believe, through the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, that the Lord has indeed risen, but for those who question the bodily resurrection of Jesus. Unfortunately, there are also those among Christian theologians who want to reinterpret the resurrection mythically! Let us call out to them with firmness: *"The Lord has risen from the dead"*, and best of all, let us immediately give them the answer that is cultivated especially in the Eastern Church: *"He is truly risen! Hallelujah!"*

For if there were no resurrection, our faith would be foolish. Thus St. Paul calls out to the church in Corinth: *"And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is pointless and you have not, after all, been released from your sins. In addition, those who have fallen asleep in Christ are utterly lost. If our hope in Christ has been for this life only, we are of all people the most pitiable."* (1 Cor 15:17-19) and even more clearly: *"If the dead are not going to be raised, then Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we shall be dead."* (1 Cor 15:33)

So let us not listen to those who deny the bodily resurrection of Jesus, who deny the presence of Jesus in the Holy Eucharist, who place Jesus among the founders of

other religions and thus falsify the missionary mandate of the Son of God and much more! Let us pray for them, that they will awaken from their errors. Instead, we confess in word and deed: *"The Lord is risen! Hallelujah!"* That is why hope lives: it is called Jesus!

Let us look at the persons of this text who first come into contact with the fact of the "empty tomb": The loving Mary of Magdala, who wanted to testify her love to the Lord even in death and who comes to the tomb before daybreak! She also stands for the faithful love of the woman! In our Church it is often the women who, "in the night of faith", who are more and more drawn into this world and Church, remain faithful to the Lord. It was mostly the "Babushkas", the old women, who in the times of Soviet darkness held out at the grave of the persecuted Church and supported her with their love.

Then Mary from Magdala became the messenger, first of all of the empty grave. *"They have taken the Lord out of the tomb," she said, 'and we don't know where they have put him"*, she exclaims and you feel her pain! If you don't even leave the dead alone anymore! Where is her master?

Did his gravediggers carry the body away?

Do the gravediggers in the church try to remove the traces of the Lord from the hearts of believers?

Then there are Peter and John, who are called by Mary from Magdala and hurry to the tomb, John first! Although the latter looked into the tomb first, he let Peter go first.

One likes to interpret that the favorite disciple of the Lord recognized many things more quickly through his love for Jesus, because true love does this. And it is true: only love opens the whole view, because God himself is love. It would be more accurate to speak of "true love", because love must be rooted in the truth, otherwise it can become a blind emotion that does not really recognize!

Peter, who already presided over the disciples and to whom the Lord gives it for the whole Church, is the first to enter the tomb! It will later become his task, and that of his successors, to officially proclaim the fact of Christ's resurrection through the centuries and to confess the true faith.

But first of all, the empty tomb, the linen bandages, the folded face-cloth speaks. John saw and believed, but they did not yet have a real understanding of the

resurrection of the dead, which the Lord had foretold! They still need a little way to come to the whole knowledge! Jesus will lead them there and may he lead us too, so that the reality of his resurrection may be deeply and firmly rooted in our faith and be a constant source of hope!