

BREAKING OPEN THE WORD



April 20, 2014

Resurrection of the Lord

The Mass of Easter Sunday

Lectionary: 42

Gospel Jn 20:1-9

On the first day of the week, Mary of Magdala came to the tomb early in the morning, while it was still dark, and saw the stone removed from the tomb. So she ran and went to Simon Peter and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and told them, "They have taken the Lord from the tomb, and we don't know where they put him." So Peter and the other disciple went out and came to the tomb. They both ran, but the other disciple ran faster than Peter and arrived at the tomb first; he bent down and saw the burial cloths there, but did not go in. When Simon Peter arrived after him, he went into the tomb and saw the burial cloths there, and the cloth that had covered his head, not with the burial cloths but rolled up in a separate place. Then the other disciple also went in, the one who had arrived at the tomb first, and he saw and believed. For they did not yet understand the Scripture that he had to rise from the dead.

Spiritual Reflections

In the middle ages the death of a king or queen provided great opportunities for pomp and circumstance, for pageantry and ceremony. One of the most insightful of these traditions surrounded the Hapsburg family, who at one time ruled over most of Europe and were arguably one of the most powerful families of medieval Europe. When a member of this family would die, the body would be placed in its casket and a great procession would take place with hundreds of hundreds people taking part. The procession would go from the castle to the local Church where the funeral would take place. Upon arrival at the Church a chosen family member would walk forward and knock on the locked Church doors. The priest of the church would come to the door and answer it and as part of the ritual would ask "who was there?" The chosen family member would then say king so and so of the Hapsburg family and list all the accomplishments of the deceased. It did not matter how long or how short the list was or what accomplishments the deceased may have accomplished in his lifetime the priest would respond the same: "I have never heard of him" and then the priest would close the door. The chosen family member would then knock on the lock church door a second time and the priest would come to the door again and ask "who was there?" but this time the family member would simply answer "a humble sinner". And with that the priest would open the door and welcome everyone into the Church. This ritual with all its pomp and circumstance served to remind everyone that entrance into the gates of heaven had nothing to do with one's wealth or one's accomplishments but rather rested solely on the mercy of God. This is what we celebrate this Easter that entrance into heaven has nothing to do with us but everything to do with God. Sacred Scripture constantly reminds us that it is not about our ability or strength but rather all about God's amazing and saving grace.

Spiritual Questions

1. What will the last Judgment look like?
2. Name Bible Characters who think you will find in heaven and why?
3. What would life be like without a chance at Eternal life?
4. What does the communal aspect of heaven look like toward you?
5. Do you trade the stories of Easter like the guards did for material possessions?