

Lectio Divina. Easter Sunday. Cycle C

Province of Bogota (Colombia), Sr. Doris Rojas R., April 17, 2022.- "Make yourself a Peter or a John; run to the tomb, do it in haste and with others; compete in this beautiful effort. And if you are overtaken by speed, overcome by eagerness, not to glance in passing at the sepulcher, but to enter in."¹



Picture by "The disciples Peter and John running to the tomb on the morning of the Resurrection"

INTRODUCTION

This is a feast day! As Christians we celebrate with joy the triumph of life over death, the Easter joy comforts us and fills us with hope in the midst of the different realities of death and sadness that overwhelm the world. The Risen Christ is the symbol of the victory that rises to strengthen His people. The sadness of the woman who is looking for Jesus, her anguish and despair as well as the astonishment of the disciples when entering the empty tomb, are appeased by the presence of the Risen Lord. Let us go out and, like the beloved disciple, let us recognize the signs of the Risen Lord to be full of joy and strengthened by our faith.

"Lord, give us your Holy Spirit, so that we may bear witness to you like the disciples, announcing to all, that you are risen, that you are alive. May it be so."

¹ Gregorio Nacianceno, "Holy Easter Discourse" 45,24: J. C. Elowsky y Th. C. Ogden (eds.), *The Bible commented by the Fathers of the Church. Gospel according to John (11-21)*, tomo 4b: New Testament, New City: Madrid, 2007, p. 433.

GOSPEL

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.*»

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."

STUDYING THE TEXT

This moving biblical passage offers us a scene in which the characters are highlighted in a quite eloquent and emotional way; analyzing them can be a good input to understand the context and what their expressions can mean for our life.

In the first scene we find **Mary Magdalene**, who at dawn, when darkness still reigned, goes out to the place where the body of the Lord lies. In this section, we find one of the signs: the tomb as a place of mystery that generates doubt, anxiety and fear. She runs hurriedly to announce to the apostles what happened in the early morning of the first day. The Mary Magdalene's experience, as the first woman to witness the Resurrection, is the icon of evangelization.

In the second scene, the two disciples **Simon Peter and the other disciple** are presented, the text makes it clear: the one whom Jesus loved. Both thus become witnesses of the resurrection of Jesus. They are disturbed by the words of the woman who says "*They have taken the Lord out of the tomb,' she said, 'and we don't know where they have put him*", they run away together but the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, ran faster than Peter; he went ahead and arrived first at the tomb; and, bending down, he saw the linen cloths lying there; but he did not go in. Then, Simon Peter also came up behind him and entered the tomb; he saw the linen cloths lying, and the cloth that had been over his head. The other disciple also comes in, the one who had come first to the tomb; and he sees and believes. The text is convincing: the one whom Jesus loved was the one who saw and believed immediately.

The two disciples, seeing the signs in a processual way believe in the Resurrection, each one at his own time. This event generates a profound change in the relationship of the disciples with Jesus. The last thing they had witnessed about Jesus, the "Incarnate Word", was his death on the Cross and burial. His body had remained rigid and cold, wrapped in bandages, as it was the tradition at that time. But Jesus overcomes the rigidity of death, he rises and enters into eternal life with God. This had been announced by the Scripture, as today's text says: *"Till this moment they had still not understood the scripture, that he must rise from the dead."* (Jn 20:9).

It is from this encounter with the living and risen Jesus that the disciples will be able to understand the Scriptures and interpret all what was said about him. So, the Gospel shows us the first steps Peter and the beloved disciple went through in order to have the experience of the Risen Lord.

MEDITATION WHAT DOES THE TEXT TELL ME?

The story of the empty tomb, the characters that appear in the scene, as well as the signs and words that complete the story helped the first Christian communities to have a foundation for their faith.

The beloved disciple was convinced because what he saw with his own eyes. However, he needed love to understand the small signs. Love gave him a vision to read the signs. And this love did not come from himself, but from the extraordinary love he first received from Jesus. That is why he bears the title of the "Beloved Disciple of Jesus".

Some questions may help us to interiorize the text and to find out what God wants to tell us. So, let us ask ourselves:

- With which character do I identify myself more in the reading? Am I an early riser to go "running" in search of Jesus like Mary? Am I more like Peter who needs Mary to announce the resurrection to go in search of Jesus? or Am I like the disciple who arrived first, entered last, but saw and believed? Let us review the different attitudes of each one of them to see with whom I identify myself.
- What are the signs I have found on my way, in people, in the world, that help me to find the living and Risen Lord?
- What practical teaching does this story leave in me?

After a time of personal meditation, let us share with simplicity our reflection, what the text speaks to us in our own reality and personal situation. It can be done through an external symbol to help the community's sharing.

PRAYER: WHAT DO I SAY TO THE LORD?

The beloved disciple's closeness to Jesus led him to "see and believe". The same trust that we experience when we have an encounter with the Word is manifested as well on those moments of prayer when we confess: "You are our Risen Lord". In a moment of silence let us pray to the Risen Christ, listening to Him once again.

CONTEMPLATION: WHAT IS THIS TEXT INVITING US TO COMMIT OURSELVES?

The resurrection of Jesus encourages our faith to face existence with a new horizon. For evil does not have the last word: pain, suffering, oppression, injustice, death do not have the last word. The resurrecting power of love has conquered death, and leads us to live with more confidence the daily realities and to face them with courage and commitment, therefore the invitation of Easter is to go out and Live:

Let us go out to live!

*Let us go out and have the adventure
to meet with all those who walk,
to enjoy nature, to enjoy being in company.*

Let's go out to live!

*Let us free ourselves from so many ties and ashes that anchor us to the earth,
and let us go through the Sea of Galilee, letting ourselves be carried by the Wind.*

Let us go out to live!

*Let us take a deep breath, let us breathe deeply, let us wider our heart,
let us spread our wings without fear, let us take flight and soar high.*

Let us go out to live!

*Though the struggle is hard, and the road is long and narrow,
though doubt and failure appear, and death scares us sometimes.*

*Let us go out to live and to love,
to meet you, the Risen Christ!*

Florentino Ulibarri²

² Ulibarri Fernández, Florentino; Encrucijadas y encuentros: Plegarias para orar y celebrar en Cuaresma y Pascua