

## **The Empty Tomb . The Homily on the Easter Sunday, April 12, 2020**

On the third day after our Lord was buried, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb to anoint his body. The tomb was empty! Had his body been removed? She ran back and reported this shocking incident to Peter and the other disciple whom Jesus loved. Peter, the other Apostle and Mary ran to the tomb and found everything as Mary reported. The two Apostles not knowing what to make out of this went back home. They had not seen any evidence of robbery or things done hurriedly as thieves would do. The burial cloth and the cloth that covered our Lord's head were neatly rolled up in a separate place in the tomb (John 20:6-7). What could have happened?

Providentially, I had the privilege of entering into this tomb and celebrating Mass when I went to the holy land last year. A wonderful experience! The awe one feels inside the tomb of the Lord makes it clear that something supernatural happened there. The body of the Lord was no longer there.

Outside the tomb Mary Magdalene waited and wept. Her patience was rewarded. She went back and looked into the tomb. She saw two angels in white sitting there, one at the head and one at the feet where the body of Jesus had been" (John 20:12). Before she could respond to the question the

angels asked her, she saw the risen Lord but did not recognize him until the Lord called her name. In her surprise and heart-expanding joy, she must have tried to embrace him. Because the Lord said to her, "Stop holding on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and tell them, 'I am going to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God'" (John 20:17).

The Old Testament foretold this event thousands of years before, "For you will not abandon my soul to sheol, nor let your devout one see the pit (Psalm 16:10). As he came to a deeper understanding of the resurrection of Christ after series of encounters with the risen Lord, Peter said, "God raised him up, releasing him from the throes of death, because it was impossible for him to be held by it" (Acts 2:26). Peter proclaimed that the prophecy above was fulfilled in Christ's resurrection, "My flesh will dwell in hope, for you will not abandon my soul to Hades, nor let your holy One see corruption. You have made known to me the ways of life" (Acts 2:26-28).

Dear brothers and sisters, observing Sunday as the Lord's day is more evidence of effects of the resurrection which Benedict XVI, Pope emeritus brought to our awareness. He wrote: "If we bear in mind the immense importance attached to the Sabbath in the Old Testament tradition on the basis of Creation account and Decalogue, then it is clear that only an event of extraordinary impact could have led

to the abandonment of the Sabbath and its replacement by the first day of the week.”<sup>1</sup> Continuing, he wrote, “For me, the celebration of the Lord's day, which was a characteristic part of the Christian community from the outset is one of the most convincing proofs that something extraordinary happened that day - the discovery of the empty tomb and the encounter with the risen Lord.”<sup>2</sup>

Knowing that Jesus is risen and is at the right hand of the Father with the glorified human body interceding for us, what should we do? God tells us, "Think of what is above, not of what is on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God" (Colossians 3:2-3).

How can we begin this new life? St Peter tells us: "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38). Pope Francis: "Take a step toward Jesus [and] to realize that he is already there, waiting for us with open arms."

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<sup>1</sup> Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth Part Two From the Entrance into Jerusalem to the Resurrection* ( San Francisco: Ignatius press, 2011), p.259.

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