



PAX CHRISTI

Dear Brothers,

On wishing you every good and spiritual bounty this Easter 2023, I would like to share with you some reflections stirred in me by the Gospel passage of the Easter Day liturgy, John 20:1-9, which presents us with the experience of the resurrection.

The discovery of the empty tomb leads Mary of Magdala to break the news to Peter and the beloved disciple: the latter, having entered the tomb, "*saw and believed*". This is the beginning of Easter faith. From that first day of the week, Jesus' resurrection also becomes an event of word, proclamation, indeed it becomes the word par excellence that the Church is called to proclaim and witness.

What strikes my attention is the verb "*run*" in which Mary, Peter, and John are involved in a team game, like a relay race. A race that reveals, in the first witnesses who rushed to the empty tomb, the emotional aspect of the relationship with the Jesus whom they had recognized as their Lord and for whom they had abandoned everything. Mary of Magdala, lost in front of the overturned stone from the tomb, runs, almost moved by the fear that something irreparable has happened: Mary fears that she cannot see and touch the body of her Lord, fears that she has lost every visible point of reference of her loved one, even the last one, the one characterized by a tombstone, a still point where memories and affections can be gathered. Mary runs and goes immediately, instinctively, to Peter and the beloved disciple, the landmarks of the group of disciples.

The two, in turn, run and this race expresses anxiety, desire, the will not to waste time or perhaps fear that it is already too late. The beloved disciple runs faster than Peter, almost no longer enforcing the rules of the group. Having reached the tomb, however, John waits for Peter and lets him enter first, respecting the primacy established by the Lord. The emotional and affective level of Mary (who runs to the two disciples) and the beloved disciple (who waits for Peter and lets him enter the tomb first) remain ordered and under the communitarian objectivity. However, guiding emotivity and affectivity to full faith will require the intelligence of Scripture and faith in it, which are ineliminable and objectifying foundations of Easter faith and ecclesial life.

I think all this leads us to reflect that prompt apostolicity is readiness to run, in seeking the Lord. It becomes a proclamation, in the image of the Gospel passage, when in full self-dominion it realizes the synodal walk or run in respect of the roles that express communitarian objectivity. As the fruit of the Spirit of Christ, the Order is not a collection of free riders, a gathering of friends, much less a group of colleagues in competition, if not competitive rivalry! We are a family of disciples, a portion of the Church of the Risen One, raised up and composed by Him. Then the Easter movement described by the Gospel turns out to be a paradigm of our life and gives meaning to the renewal of vows made on this solemn day.

But there is another treasure to be embraced. In our text we do not yet have the Easter announcement; rather, what Mary of Magdala runs to tell the two disciples is, "*They have taken the Lord away from the tomb and we do not know where they have placed him.*" Mary, in her

bewilderment made up of fear and distress, takes it for granted that Jesus' body has been stolen and her concern centers on "*where*" the body is now. Mary claims to find the Lord there where she expects Him; she is unable to look for Him there where He wants to be found. Instead, it is necessary to seek the absent, to see the unseen, to find the one who has no recognizable place: these are the elements that characterize the search for the Lord even today, refusing the claim to know with certainty where Christ is, where he is to be sought and where not. The Gospel account thus shows the becoming of Easter faith by presenting its dawning moment, the kindling of a spark that will soon burst into a fire.

The inner journey that will lead to the cry and proclamation "*He is risen*" passes through becoming aware of the evidences of death: one must enter the dark tomb of grief, separation, abandonment, the end of relationships and friendships, uncommunication, but also selfish closedness, arrogance, abuse, violence, manipulation, and indifference, in order to be able to come to the light of a faith—the Christian faith—that is not mere confidence in life, but certainty that life is born from death through the power of Christ's love. It enables us to enter into situations of death by looking beyond death and experiencing resurrection, that is, by loving or seeking to love as Christ loved and, above all, by believing in his love for us.

It is about making such a communitarian and personal journey, from darkness to the uncreated light of the Risen One. We are indeed on the "*first*" day of the week, but dawn has not yet broken, we are, like Mary of Magdala, still in darkness. Three disciples, three different reactions when faced with the empty tomb, among them the emerging faith of the beloved disciple who, upon seeing the wrappings on the ground and entering the empty tomb, "*believed*" (Jn. 20:8), or rather, "*began to believe*" for "*For they had not yet understood the Scripture that he should rise from the dead*" (Jn. 20:9). Facts must be set alongside the words of Scripture and illuminated by them: only then will they give birth to Easter faith. Faith that will find its fullness with the gift of the Spirit who enlightens minds, opening them to the wisdom of the Scriptures, toward the understanding of the event of the resurrection, an unheard of, unthinkable and astounding event. It is the newness that God creates in the world. The disciples are totally unprepared for the resurrection event and struggle to access the revelation. Only the beloved disciple, precisely because of that concealment of the mystery of love that binds him to Jesus, begins to have an insight and to make room in his soul for the newness accomplished by God.

Therefore, we are invited, yesterday as today, in full docility to the Holy Spirit, to place as the foundation of our common life the wisdom of the Scriptures, the study and common meditation of the Word; may they be the cornerstone of every day, in order to gain a resurrected life in Christ.

Let us give thanks to God for the love poured into our hearts in Christ that leads us to recognize and follow him in order to be his witnesses. Let us thank Him in the gift of solemn profession in Chile and Colombia of Clerics John Jairo Pino and Will Rivera, in the gift of ordained ministry in the degree of diaconate to Ch. Antony Jose Vivek.

May Mary, the first fruit of the risen, obtain for us every gift of grace for a common journey of ever more luminous and apostolic faith.

Santiago de Chile, April 02, 2023
Palm Sunday

Truly yours,

Most.Rev.Fr. Antonio, Luigi Piccolo
Rector General, OMD