

Easter 2020

We have had an abundance of words during the Triduum, particularly in Good Friday's Reading of the Passion, and in tonight's Easter Vigil, when additional readings from scripture are proclaimed.

Tonight, I want to focus on just four words from the instructions we just heard from the angel to Mary Magdalene, the "other" Mary and Salome; which in turn are instructions to us from the Lord. For when the scriptures are proclaimed, we are not simply retelling history. We are proclaiming mystery, in that Our Risen Lord is speaking to us right now. And the four words are: don't, behold, go and tell.

First, "don't." Do not be afraid." And there are many who are afraid for their lives or the lives of a loved one, because:

- ✓ they've been diagnosed
- ✓ their loved one has been diagnosed
- ✓ or their loved one is on the front lines treating those diagnosed
- ✓ they need their job
- ✓ they need their life's savings
- ✓ and they don't know what's coming next . . .

Why not be afraid?

- ✓ because Jesus who was dead, is alive.
- ✓ because Jesus is Lord.
- ✓ because Jesus is Almighty.
- ✓ because this world, and your life and mine are in His hands.

because this entire pandemic is right in the palm of His Hand.

- ✓ because He has it, he's got it, and He gets it
- ✓ because there's no point in worrying about tomorrow
because Our Risen Lord is already there.

All of the words, all of the scriptures that were heard during the Triduum have but one purpose: to indicate to us, in one way or another, in one story or another, that God loves us so much that He will not let the creatures He created in His image and His likeness fall subject to decay. He redeemed us. He saved us. That's His plan. And He didn't do it by waving His Hand, or by snapping His fingers. Had He done that, I doubt anyone would have remembered that 2000 years later. Rather:

- ✓ He jumped into history,
- ✓ as a Man,
- ✓ became one of us,
- ✓ lived a human life,

✓ and then went to the cross.

And we say that so matter of factly, because we are so far removed from what a crucifixion entails. Crucifixion is barbaric. Yet, you know who is not far removed from crucifixion? Right now? Persecuted Christians. Not too long ago, I received an email with photos of Christian children being crucified by ISIS, and, although they were only photos of crucifixion, they made my nauseous. Yes, that's how God redeemed us, by going through something so barbaric that it would make you vomit.

So that means your life is not meaningless if God would die for it in such a barbaric way, and that gives me extraordinary hope, no matter what. So "don't." Do not be afraid.

Second, behold! Synonyms for behold:

- ✓ see,
- ✓ observe,
- ✓ view,
- ✓ look at,
- ✓ watch,
- ✓ survey,
- ✓ witness,

- ✓ gaze at,
- ✓ gaze upon,
- ✓ regard,
- ✓ contemplate,
- ✓ inspect.

You can't become Catholic overnight, unless you are on your deathbed. This year, seven adults will become Catholic. In ordinary times, they would become Catholic tonight, but this year, they will become Catholic, hopefully on Pentecost Sunday:

- ✓ Seven confirmed
- ✓ Four receiving First Holy Communion

But this did not, and will not happen overnight. They had to study and learn. They attended classes every week since September, pouring through the scriptures and Vatican Council documents. Why? So they can behold:

- ✓ see,
- ✓ observe,
- ✓ view,
- ✓ look at,
- ✓ watch,
- ✓ survey,

- ✓ witness,
- ✓ gaze at,
- ✓ gaze upon,
- ✓ regard,
- ✓ contemplate,
- ✓ inspect

the Catholic faith; so they can think through the decision; so they know enough of what the Catholic Church teaches, so they can engage their reason and say, “Yes, I believe that too!”

Case in point. All four gospel accounts record the first witnesses to the Resurrection were women. So what! So what? Well, in that time, women had zero credibility. If you were going to court and you needed someone to testify on your behalf, you would never have a woman testify. Women wouldn't be admissible anyway. Our Blessed Lord's plan was to first witness to women, and not just women, Mary Magdalene. And we all know who she was! She had a checkered past. She had seven demons dragged out of her. She was a bit off. Who in the world, would pick, as a witness to something as unbelievable as a Resurrection, a prostitute, someone once possessed by the devil? That's Magdalene. An incredible story witnessed by incredible women. Why? Because that is exactly

how it happened. Because people who believed in Him and people who did not believe in Him saw Him, from one very learned and trusted man named Paul, who hated Him, to a prostitute possessed by the devil, named Mary Magdalene who loved Him. So we behold to believe, and now that we believe, the third and four words: go and tell.

The message of the angel to the women and to us is not just Jesus has been raised, but Jesus has been raised, so “go and tell.” Pope Francis describes the Church as a field hospital, meaning what? Meaning the world in which we are living is experiencing triage.

Behind all the glitz, all the glamour, all the money, all the stuff, all the affluence, all the material goods this world has to offer are:

- ✓ broken people,
- ✓ hurt lives,
- ✓ hopelessness,
- ✓ despair,
- ✓ confusion,
- ✓ a sense of bewilderment,
- ✓ and rampant suicide,

mostly among the young, who should have the rest of their lives in front of them. How can we have all this, and still be restless?

When you're young, you haven't accomplished:

- ✓ don't have a career,
- ✓ don't have a house,
- ✓ don't have a car,
- ✓ haven't been overseas,

and when we're old, and we have accomplished all of that and we're still not satisfied. Why is that? Because these things do not and are not supposed to satisfy. It's not what we want. What you want, what I want, what the world wants is God. And He alone can satisfy. And yet, to speak of Him is no longer allowed out there, but only in here, behind these walls (for now):

- ✓ No more world day of prayer; it might offend
- ✓ No prayer in public places; it might offend
- ✓ No Nativity sets in front of city hall; it might offend
- ✓ No Ten Commandments in front of the court house; it might offend.

So what's the alternative? You go, I'll go and tell, "offline:"

- ✓ Over a cup of coffee

- ✓ In the gym
- ✓ In the Shop Rite
- ✓ At a hospital bed
- ✓ When all this is over.

Go and tell “offline” how it is your faith in Jesus Who is getting you through the silence of this pandemic. Go and tell “offline” by how you live your life and how I live mine, and by the words we speak.

So we need to “go and tell” so we can bring others “in,” so next year, there’ll be another 8, 12, 15, people received into the Church at the Easter Vigil.

Many people consider the Gospel to be “bad news,” because if you buy the gospel, then you’ll probably have to change. If you follow the Gospel, you’ll get less, not more.

But it’s not bad news. The Gospel is “good news.” The Gospel is “more, not less,” – more on the inside, not on the outside, as those of us who have come inside ourselves know, as those of you who have furthered your faith this past year, through RCIA, through the Christ Life Small group ministry, through scripture study, through Adoration, know more on the inside. Those of us with more on the inside need to go and tell. Go and tell those who have nothing on the inside, who think

that this pandemic is unsurmountable. Why would we not go and tell, why would not want others to know the same, to have more on the inside?

The image is the Light of Christ. That's us. The world is getting darker and darker, and more and more confused, especially of late in this pandemic. These are unprecedented times in our lifetime. Not in the lifetime of mankind, but in our lifetime. But the more and more the light of Christ shines through us, and living joyfully and peacefully during a time when a lot of unbelievers are at the end of their financial, emotional, physical, psychological and spiritual rope, some of whom just might hang themselves by that rope, then the more people will ask, "Why are you so different?" And the more we can tell them, "Not because I'm optimistic, not because I'm ignorant, not because I'm naive, not because I'm bigoted, but because of who is on the inside, Our Risen Lord:

- ✓ Who endured the cross
- ✓ Who overcame death
- ✓ Who loves me regardless of my past
- ✓ Who is a good God who frees
- ✓ And gives life
- ✓ And calls to friendship

- ✓ And provides peace
- ✓ And wants all to come to Him
- ✓ Who is a God of second, third, fourth chances
- ✓ And His love is immeasurable
- ✓ And who so much greater than any pandemic.

So, yes, don't be afraid. Behold and believe. And go and tell.