

**April 12, 2020 No More Tears Homily:** One of the movements from Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's celebrated Requiem mass, a jewel in the history of sacred music, is "Lacrimosa", the Latin word for weeping. It is to be expected that on the day of mourning for us to see tears shed by those who have lost a loved one. In the Wisdom literature of the Old Testament we are reminded that there is a "time to weep and a time to mourn". (Eccles. 3:4) Mozart's hauntingly beautiful musical score remains a source of inspiration and consolation for members of the Christian faithful, and surprisingly, even for those who have no faith at all.

The twentieth chapter of John's gospel recounts the most fascinating news in history: The Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. One of the key figures in John's narrative is Mary Magdalene, a woman who stayed faithful to Jesus throughout his Passion. On the morning of Christ's Resurrection, she is the first to arrive at the tomb. It is not without significance that "it is still dark" (Jn. 20:1), as it is for all of us who are plunged into grief and sorrow upon losing a loved one. Twice she is asked the same question: "Why are you weeping?" (Jn. 20: 13, 15) The word "weep" occurs four times in the John's account of Christ's Resurrection. No one else weeps... only Mary. Indeed, her copious tears will be one of her symbols in the history of Christian art.

Why does Mary weep?

First, she mourns the death of her friend, teacher and Lord. Her heart is broken; Second, she unexpectedly finds the tomb empty. As one spiritual writer puts it, "the tomb is as empty as her heart". She fears that His tomb may have been violated, that grave robbers may have been the ones responsible for the theft. "They have taken the Lord from the tomb and we do not know where they put him." (Jn.20:3)

It simply does not occur to her that Jesus may have been raised from the dead. But on Easter Sunday morning Mary was the first witness to the Resurrection of Jesus. She said, "I have seen the Lord". (Jn. 20:18) The prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled: "The Lord God will wipe away the tears from all faces". Jesus is true to his word. Earlier in John's gospel Jesus said, "You will weep and moan... you will grieve and your grief will turn to joy." (Jn. 16:20))

There is no more profound mystery of our faith than the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. Death for us is not the end of the story. It is merely the beginning of a new chapter. There is life after death. It is a life with God. Easter is a day of hope for all believers. Recall the words of St. Paul from his letter to the fledgling Christian community in Rome: "If, then, we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him. We know that Christ, raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has power over him." (Rom. 6:8, 9)

In China, the place of origin for the Corona virus pandemic, the tragic victims who lost their lives due to the virus, were brutally treated by the officially atheistic state. Families of the departed had little time to grieve and to express their deep sorrow. Bodies were incinerated and immediately forgotten, as if they never existed. Some journalists reported a ghoulish practice of burning those afflicted with the disease alive! Is a human life disposable? Are the dead to be regarded as only a statistic, soon to be erased from the collective memory of the state government? Is human life sacred?

We believe in the resurrection of the body. Hence, the grave is a sacred place. We gather at grave sites because we truly believe that we will one day be re-united with our loved ones.

Mary Magdalene's perseverance teaches us that anyone who sincerely keeps searching for Christ will eventually find him. Easter is not a day for weeping, unless we weep for joy in response to the Good News of Christ's Resurrection.

Dear brothers and sister, celebrate Easter. It is your hope and mine. Our life is meaningful. Nothing can defeat us any more... not pain, not sorrow, and not even death.

Alleluia! Christ is truly alive. He has been raised from the dead. He has emerged from the tomb victorious. I know that my Redeemer lives and I shall see him on the last day.

Do not be afraid! We are an alleluia people.

Amen!