



Easter Vigil Mass - B
April 3, 2021
Mark 16:1-8

Background on the Gospel and its Role in the Vigil Liturgy:

The proclamation of the Gospel always manifests the abiding presence of the Risen Lord Jesus; the very act of proclaiming renews our confidence in His presence among us. We hear the Lord speaking directly to us. This mystery is all the more real and vivid at the Easter Vigil. We experience the unfolding of Resurrection happening in our midst as our “elect” become members of the Body of Christ: a new life is being generated among us!

As we hear the Easter Vigil Gospel proclaimed we are not supposed to focus on the historical fact of the empty tomb as much as we let the dynamism of the process of Resurrection happening within each of us and all of us: we die and we rise. We set aside our isolation and allow ourselves to be swept into the immersion process. We enter into Christ's dying and rising as one holy and renewed people. The text comes alive through us and among us – especially this year of pandemic - with all our losses and disappointments, fears and dreams, love conquers death! Life cannot be destroyed forever.

Mark's account of the empty tomb emphasizes that it was God's action and God's power: the large stone had already been rolled away before the women arrive. Their “problem” had been “solved” ahead of time. ☺

The angel (dressed in linen much like the young man that ran away and left the linen sheet behind in Mark 14:52) announces to the women that Jesus has been raised. They are to tell Peter and the disciples that they should go to Galilee where they will meet Him. Galilee, of course, is where it all began; they are to return and start all over again. There is no need for the women to anoint the body; that had already happened ahead of time (see Mark 14:8); Jesus had indeed promised to go ahead of them to Galilee (Mark 14:28).

The ending of the Gospel is not an ending! It is a circle: restart again!

Note that the women fled from the tomb – half joyful and half fearful and said nothing to anyone. Obviously they did! Otherwise, we would not be assembled here for this vigil. But Mark leaves us in suspense: what will happen? Will the women obey and send the disciples to Galilee??

Thoughts for prayer and reflection:

- 1) *“Jesus Christ is the same – yesterday, today and forever.” These words from Hebrews 13:13 also function as part of the prayer for the blessing of the Paschal Candle: Christ alone is the true light: He has always been light even before time began, a light that never fails even when rejected, a light that allows us eternal vision.*

This night of light is powerful and dramatic, a source of hope in dark and confusing times. Like the women at the tomb, however, we are called to trust in the promises we can only partially see. We have to be willing to risk going into the darkness of the unknown. Pray for the grace to wait for Christ's light that provides perspective and comfort. Pray with and for all in darkness.

- 2) *This Gospel emphasizes the stone removed by God: what stumbling block is a struggle for you at this time? Pray for the grace to trust and the vision to see the times and ways God has intervened.*
- 3) *Pray consciously and deliberately for all joining the Church this night as they die and rise: dying to their "old" self and rising now as members of the Body of Christ – no longer independent but rather, immersed into Christ's Body. They share the same life you do! Together, we are all one in Christ.*
- 4) *"Go to Galilee": where is my Galilee, my place of first "meeting" Jesus? Can I return to that time/place of "first love" and innocent, almost naïve hopefulness? Pray for the grace to be "born again"!*