

Homily – Easter Sunday

April 21, 2019

The moments just before, during, and after sunrise are the settings for today's gospel. Mary Magdalene hurries to the tomb while it is still dark. Simon Peter and the beloved disciple arrive at sunrise. They return to the upper room in the early morning hour.

What happens within these three individuals resembles the gradual, glorious process of a sunrise. In effect, all three begin in darkness. They do not yet understand the meaning of the events of the past few days, especially Jesus' agonizing suffering and death.

Mary of Magdala begins in darkness and remains there. She sees that the stone before Jesus' tomb has been rolled back, but she does not look into the empty tomb itself. After hearing her breathless report, Simon Peter runs through the darkness. He notices that the stone had been rolled back enters the tomb. But he does not know the meaning of what he sees. The disciple whom Jesus loved runs faster than Peter but enters the empty tomb only after Peter has done so. He had stood at the foot of the cross, and his heart was broken. But his love for Jesus never waned. When he sees the empty tomb, he believes! Love and faith are connected!

Pope Francis has said that “to celebrate Easter is to believe once more that God constantly breaks into our personal histories, challenging our ‘conventions,’ those fixed ways of thinking and acting that end up paralyzing us. To celebrate Easter is to allow Jesus to triumph over the craven fear that so often assails us and tries to bury every kind of hope. . . The empty tomb should challenge us and rally our spirits. It should make us think, but above all it should encourage us to trust and believe that God [is present] in every situation and in every person, and that his light can shine in the least expected and most hidden corners of our lives.”

Faith is like a sunrise. It begins in darkness, progresses through various shades of color from pale to bright, and culminates in the full light that throws everything else into proper perspective.

The Lord has given us a special sign of his presence and love: the empty tomb! Christ has risen! In faith, let us say Alleluia! In love, let us praise the Lord! Alleluia!