



## PARISH OF ST. AGATHA 1

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### ENCOUNTERING CHRIST MEANS FINDING PEACE OF HEART

On Easter Monday, Pope Francis speaks of the Angel's appearance and the proclamation of Christ's Resurrection, noting that in finding the Risen Christ we discover peace of heart. Pope Francis recalled that the day is also known as *Monday of the Angel* because "we recall the meeting of the Angel with the women who arrived at Jesus' tomb" after He had risen. The Angel said to them: "I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for He has risen" This expression - "He has risen" - goes beyond human capacity, said the Pope. Even the women who had gone to the tomb and had found it open and empty could not confirm "He has risen", but only that the tomb was empty. Only an Angel could say that Jesus had risen just as only an Angel had been able to say to Mary: "you will conceive a Son...and He will be called the Son of the Most High."

### THE LORD'S INTERVENTION

The Pope then noted that "there was a great earthquake; for an Angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone, and sat on it." He explained that the large stone, which "was supposed to be the seal of the victory of evil and death, was put underfoot," and "becomes the footstool of the angel of the Lord." All of the plans and defences of Jesus's enemies and persecutors were in vain, he said. The image of the Angel sitting on the stone before the tomb is "the concrete, visible manifestation of God's victory over evil, of Christ's victory over the prince of this world, of light over darkness. Jesus's tomb was not opened by a physical phenomenon, but by the Lord's intervention. The Angel's appearance, "was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow." "These details are symbols that confirm the intervention of God himself, bearer of a new era, of the last times of history," said the Pope.

### A TWO-FOLD REACTION

There is a two-fold reaction in beholding this intervention on God's part, said Pope Francis. The first is that of the guards, "who cannot face the overwhelming power of God and are shaken by an interior earthquake: they became like dead men." The power of the Resurrection overthrows those who had been used to guarantee the apparent victory of death. The second is the reaction of the women, which the Pope described as being "very different" because "they are expressly invited by the Angel of the Lord not to be afraid and not to seek Jesus in the tomb."

### A LESSON FROM THE ANGELS

Pope Francis then went on to note that we can reap a precious teaching from the Angel's words. "We should never tire of seeking the Risen Christ who gives life in abundance to those who meet Him," he said. He explained that "to find Christ means to discover peace of heart." The same women of the Gospel, after initially being shaken, experience great joy in discovering the Master alive, he said. "In this Easter Season, my wish is that everyone might have the same spiritual experience, welcoming in our hearts, in our homes and in our families the joyful proclamation of Easter: '*Christ, having risen from the dead dies now no more; death will no longer have dominion over Him.*'" Finally, Pope Francis concluded that it is this certainty that "moves us to pray today and throughout the Easter Season." The Angel Gabriel had greeted [Mary] thus the first time: "Rejoice, full of grace!" (see Lk 1:28). Now Mary's joy is complete: Jesus lives; Love has conquered." "May this be our joy as well!" said the Pope. (Vatican News/ Staff Writer).

### REJOICE! DEATH IS NOT THE END OF LIFE - BUT THE BEGINNING OF LIFE

The first day of the week in the Church calendar is Sunday and *Mary of Magdala came to the tomb early that morning, while it was still dark, and saw the stone removed from the tomb* (John 20:1-9). Before the resurrection from the dead, the stone blocking any entrance to a tomb stood for the finality of death. But Jesus rolls away that stone, revealing that Death is not a finality, but a New beginning that profits the soul with a New Life. The Cross that Jesus died on is the Key that unlocks us from the grave of our sins, allowing us to rise from the dead. It will open the door to Eternal Life. There are terms and conditions for this special Key to work. Like Christ on the Cross, we too, must also die, but to our sinful way of life, while still alive on earth.

### RISE OUR HEARTS UP TO THE LORD

We are asked to enter into the spirit of the resurrection, by first spiritually rising our hearts up to the Lord, in the spirit of humility. We must acquire a *fresh spiritual way of thinking* by putting on the mind-set of Christ and allow God Our Father, to change our hardened sinful hearts of stone into hearts of love, truth and holiness, that will welcome the Word of God (Eph 4:23-24). We must not reject the Corner Stone, but align ourselves to the foundation stone of the Church and follow Christ's Path (Matt 21: 42). St. Paul tells us today (1Corinthians 5:6-8), *to clear out the old yeast, so that we may become a fresh batch of dough*, meaning to clear out the old sin from our hearts, so that we may become a fresh spiritual being. To purify the hearts entails picking up the Cross of Life, which is not easy, but when offered up to God as a sacrifice, He lightens the burden of our life, if we unite our sufferings to that of Jesus. Then, when we arrive at the Gates of Heaven, because we did not reject the Cross, we can use it to unlock the Gate into Heaven. Those souls who reject their Cross on earth will have difficulty opening the Gate.

### THY WILL BE DONE ON EARTH AS IN HEAVEN

Remember the Good Thief was on his Cross when Jesus gave him pardon and access to eternal Paradise. Mary clings to the feet of Jesus but He asks her not to cling until He ascends to Heaven and then returns in His Risen Eucharistic Body. She can then cling to Him. Psalm 90 tells us that to cling to Christ will set us free from sin and He will lift us up (resurrection) because we know His Name. The word *Passover means Paschal* in Greek. The lifeless palm branches in last week's Palm Sunday are now replaced with the living flames of faith. Today we celebrate the Good News of Resurrection. His Promise is that we too will rise from the dead to eternal Life, provided we repent for our sins and do His Will on earth, as it is in Heaven.

### WHY DID JESUS FOLD THE LINEN CLOTH?

Back in the days of the disciples, it was a Hebrew tradition at the dinner table, that if the master of the house left the table, but intended to return back to his place later, he would fold or roll-up his dinner napkin, placing it neatly on his plate mat, which indicated to his servants, that he was returning back to the table. So the servants would await attentively for his return. If the master of the house left the napkin crunched-up and untidy on the table, it indicated he was finished and was not returning. Jesus, the Master of the Church (House of God), folded and rolled up His linen cloth separately in the tomb, putting it in a neat place by itself, indicating to His disciples that He was returning from the dead, to the Banquet Table (the Altar), as Living Bread.

### LAITY ARE SOMETIMES AHEAD OF THE CHURCH!

John the Apostle represents the laity at the foot of the Cross. Note how he got to the tomb entrance first and waited for the arrival of Peter, who represents the hierarchy of the Church. While the disciples did not understand Jesus had risen from the dead, John knew, because Mary, the Mother of God, would have assured him, when they placed the Body of Christ in the tomb. Sometimes the laity is ahead of those responsible for the Church. For example, the laity have driven the belief and spread the devotion of Divine Mercy Sunday and the beauty of Eucharistic Adoration and the presence of Marian Apparitions in the Church, while many priests have not caught up with these devotions. Pray for those in authority and for the urgent return of public Mass. When you are eating your chocolate Easter Egg, be aware that it is a symbol of the Resurrection. Just as Jesus rose and emerged from the sealed tomb in a New Risen Body, so too does the new life of a chicken emerge from a sealed egg shell. A miracle! The Easter Bunnies (Rabbits) represent symbols of the plentifulness of new born life in the spring season. Have A Joyful and Blessed Easter. God bless, Fr Brendan.