

HOMILY for EASTER SUNDAY – Year ABC

This Sunday's Readings share with us Story of the Easter Miracle. Reflecting on it, I'm reminded of this cute story that I'd like to share with you.

Every morning an elderly woman would step out on her porch, raise her arms to Heaven, & shout, "Praise God!"

An atheist happened to buy the house next door to her, & over the months he became very irritated with the spiritual woman. After six months of hearing her shout "Praise God" each morning, he went outside on his porch one day & yelled, "There is no God!"

The godly woman wasn't put off in the least. She continued to praise God every day. One cold winter morning, the atheist heard the woman shout a different message. "Help me, Lord," the woman prayed. "It's very cold & I am out of food & money."

When the woman went outside the next morning, there was enough food on the porch to last her a month. "Praise God!" she shouted.

The atheist stepped out from the bushes & said, "There is no God! I bought all of those groceries for you!"

The woman raised her arms to the sky & said, "Praise God! You sent me groceries & made the Devil pay for them!"

That's how Mary Magdalene, Peter, & John felt & wanted to say "Praise God!" after they saw an empty tomb. Anyhow, recently one of our middle-school students wanted to read a book discussing whether Jesus really rose from the dead. I have commended him for his curious mind & spiritual interest in the Easter Miracle. Like that student, I read & wrote many school papers on the fascinating topic of the Easter Miracle or Jesus' Resurrection. When I was young, I often looked for concrete proofs to show that Jesus really rose from the dead. One of those proofs is the empty tomb & all the burial cloths left behind in it. As you might recall, Jesus was buried in a tomb on Good Friday & the last thing they did was to roll a huge stone to close the entrance of the tomb. That way nobody could come in or out of it. But, as we were told in the Easter Gospel, that stone was rolled away & Mary Magdalene found the tomb to be empty when she went out to check on the burial site of her beloved Jesus. Imagine if you have come out to visit the cemetery the day after the burial of your loved ones & seen an empty grave, you would be absolutely surprised & freak out like Mary Magdalene was. So, an empty tomb is the first sign that something unusual/extraordinary has happened. The early disciples then had begun to keep their eyes & ears open for more signs of the risen Christ.

In the upcoming Sundays of Easter, we'll hear more stories of the Easter Miracles such as the risen Christ appeared to doubting Thomas & got him to examine the holy wounds & confess "My Lord & my God." Or, we'll be told on how the risen Christ revealed Himself to two disillusioned disciples on their way home to Emmaus. Evidently after the burial of Jesus, all the disciples thought that was the end of the Christian movement & decided to return to their old way of life. Thankfully, the risen Christ helped them understand His death through prophecies in Scriptures & recognize His presence in the celebration of the Eucharist. Or, we are reminded about the appearance of the risen Lord to the disciples when they went fishing & then ate with Him on the shore. He also showed Himself to the disciples other times, including how He rescued Peter from prison under heavy security without anyone's notice. The point I'm trying to make is that many disciples shared their own stories of a personal encounter with the risen

Christ to help us compose the Easter Miracle. So, in addition to the empty tomb, those would be more proofs to show that Christ had really risen from the dead. Indeed, the story of the Easter Miracle is basically a series of personal encounters with the risen Christ by the early Church. It's not one single fact, or one scientific proof that would show Jesus really came back from the dead as we might have expected in modern time. It did not depend on one credible witness either. Rather, it is a collection of many witnesses & personal encounters with the risen Christ.

As I reflect on those personal encounters, I couldn't help but be interested in the story of Mary Magdalene, Peter, & John because they were the first disciples who had a personal experience with the risen Christ. One thing that those three disciples had in common, besides being the first disciples to see the risen Christ was their love for Jesus. John was well-known as the favorite disciple of Jesus & able to sit next to Him at the Last Supper. No doubt, he had much love for the Lord. In fact, he wrote a lot about love & compared it to God in his Gospel. Meanwhile, Jesus once asked Peter if he really loved Him. Three times he answered that he did; & Jesus told him to take care of His sheep & lambs. Finally, Mary Magdalene surely loved Jesus because she was one of the devout, courageous women who followed Jesus along His suffering journey all the way to the foot of His Cross. If that did not prove her love & devotion to Jesus, the fact that she went out to visit His tomb early in the morning after His burial tells us how much she loved Him. These three disciples surely loved Jesus so much that they were rewarded with a personal encounter with the risen Christ before anyone else. So, if we would like to meet the risen Christ & have a personal experience of the Easter Miracle, we must live like them & love Jesus with our whole heart & mind. When we really love someone, that person will never die or disappear from our lives forever.

Now we have begun to see the real blessings of love in our lives. Love also helps us care more about one another & pushes us to build a peaceful & prosperous community. Love makes us sacrifice for our beloved & do more things beyond the normal expectation for them. On the Cross up there, we can see what true love looks like. Can you imagine how our world would turn out if we would let love guide us instead of wealth, power, or popularity? We would see lots of miracles like the one in the cute story above. We would cut down on violence against one another & other sins in our world. That is why Jesus taught us the 2 important Commandments on love & focused His whole life on love until His last breath. But, there is one more blessing that love would bring us. It give us hope, which is the theme for this Jubilee Year. A person in love is always full of hope & joy. He/she has the enthusiasm & abundant energy to overcome any future challenges such as mental health problems. Similarly, when we are in love with Jesus, He will reveal Himself & show us a personal experience of the Easter Miracle. Furthermore, that same love will bring us hope to keep on following Him & carrying on His mission of salvation so that we will receive the same reward with our own resurrection.

My dear brothers & sisters, tonight/today is a triumphant day for us Christians as our Lord conquered death & opened the Gate of Heaven to let us share in the eternal life with God. Sins & death could no longer imprison us in this life. For Jesus had freed us from those bondages with His resurrection from the dead. He was able to give us hope beyond this life with the Easter Miracle. Meanwhile, He has shown Himself to any Christian who is deeply in love with Him like Mary Magdalene, Peter, & John. If we want a personal encounter with the risen Christ like they did, we must fall in love deeply with Jesus.