

Connecting with the Sunday Readings

Easter Sunday, The Resurrection of the Lord **Gospel Word**
John 20:1–9

The meaning attached to Easter is inexhaustible. It is the major feast of the year. Without Easter, we would not be Christians. The death of Jesus would be the final act of the life of Jesus. Of course it wasn't, and here we are today, two thousand years later, recalling that moment when Jesus became the Risen One. Yes, *this* day is the day the Lord God has made. Let us rejoice; let us be profoundly grateful to God who has not only given new life to Jesus, but to us as well.

But what was it like for his friends to see an empty tomb? Confused? Scared? Frustrated? Today's Gospel reading is akin to when the phone rings and the automatic answering machine responds: "No one is home right now. Leave a message." That's what today's Gospel reading is like: "He's not there. The tomb is empty. He is not there." Something has happened. One wonders what messages were going through Peter and John's heads. True to form, Peter rushes in but John stays at the entrance for a while. What was he doing? Recalling Jesus' words? Praying? Just being quiet? We do not know, but what we do know is that when he walked into the tomb he believed.

Of course, as Christians we know what happened. He has been raised from the dead. He lives. The forces of evil could not destroy him. God's word is the last word and that word is *live!* God creates life; God sustains life; God forgives errant life. For us and for our salvation Jesus gave his human life that we might live. Easter is not a feast celebrating the return of the sun or the leaves or the flowers. It is a feast that communicates to us that God's love for us will not end. Our God is a God of life. Jesus has risen. And with Jesus, as the Baptism ritual states, we rise with him. And we, including our family, will always be with him. Today, celebrate God's gift of life in your family, where life begins and unfolds in so many of its wonderful expressions.

Living the Word

What thoughts and feelings does the Easter story evoke in you? What a shock for the women and the Apostles. Events like this happen in our lives too. Certainly not as significant as the Resurrection but there are events when we experience death and loss. It could be the death of a family member, a divorce, the betrayal of a friend, the loss of a job. These are often the empty tombs in our lives. We feel that a part of life is being taken away from us, but once we are given the gift of life, God does not take it from us. It may change, but it is not taken away.

We live in a culture that is very confused about death. We tend to deny the reality of death. We don't like the word *death*. We act as if some day through medical wonders we will conquer death. Some have their dead bodies frozen in the hope that someday they can be thawed out and resuscitated. We act surprised when we learn that someone has died. That's not supposed to happen. For believers, the Resurrection tells us death is real but it is not final!

Today's experience of the empty tomb and the fact that Jesus has risen from the dead gives us hope and faith. It helps us look at our doubts about what life, death, and suffering are about. It helps us see beyond what we can see with our eyes. A faith like John's claims that death is not the end and God is powerful, more powerful than we can humanly imagine. Yes, *this* day is the day the Lord God has made. Let us rejoice; let us be profoundly grateful to God who has not only given new life to Jesus, but to us as well.

One-line Prayer

God the Son, thank you for the gift of your love. Help us to appreciate more and more each day your wondrous gift of life to each of us. Amen.