

THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST

It was dark, very dark, that Friday afternoon when they took Jesus down from the cross. There was no sunset that day because all was so dark. They wrapped his body hastily in a long linen shroud and placed it in a tomb newly hewn from the rock. They closed up the tomb by rolling a large rock across its entrance. It was dark outside the tomb. It was dark inside the tomb. Real night had come early to Jerusalem that day. Real night had come upon the face of the earth. The One whom some called The Light of the World lay cold and dead. He had never been very good at playing the game of politics, especially religious politics. In any age politics and religion are a volatile mix. Jesus was an innocent. People sensed it. But for that very reason he was a threat to the power structure of the day. And for that very reason, a political calculus was made in simple but brutal fashion. He was expendable. He had to go. It truly was better, in the minds of some, that one die at the hands of the Romans than that all die at the hands of the Romans. There are ways to take people down in this world. There have always been such ways. And no one is beyond reach. Not Presidents. Not kings. Not popes. Not even the Messiah.

And when his light went out, this world got really dark. What was it like inside that tomb? Do you ever wonder? How long did he lay there? How long did it take for his soul to travel to the underworld, the realm of the dead, as we say in the Apostles creed, "He descended into hell." That is where all the souls who had ever lived were to be found. They were in darkness. And was the Holy One of God not to be their slim reason for hope? Were they aware that the light had gone out upon the earth and now he lay in their midst just like them? Was their darkness even darker now? Had not all their hopes for life been placed on him? And now, here he was, in the realm of the dead with them.

In the realm of the dead their bodies did not move, only their minds, only their souls. But there was something different here. His body had not begun to decay. And then, after they noticed that, they saw something. He moved. No one moves down there. Each is fixed and frozen in place—forever. But he—he is moving. He has quickened and come to life. There is still life in him. Or rather, life has returned to him. And such a life. Unlike the life they had known. He was going to live again and never more to die. And what was he doing now? He is moving among us, extending his hand and speaking a simple word. "Come. Live again with me." **AND WE CAN. WE CAN MOVE TOO!** Everything is different now under the earth. And the darkness is lifting for all those in their graves. The spell of death has been broken for all times and for all peoples if we just believe it. If we but accept his offer so freely and lovingly extended. We choose either to live with Him or to remain where we are in the abode of the dead with its searing loneliness and crushing hatred.

On the earth, outside the tomb, it is dark early that morning. It is Sunday, the first day of the week. No one knows it yet but Sunday is now the first day of the new creation. It is the new Lord's Day for the Lord is risen as he said!

Mary Magdalen doesn't know this. No one knows this—YET. She is at the tomb in the morning darkness and she has brought cloths and spices to complete the ablutions and anointings of his body. She is prepared to unwrap and rewrap carefully to give him a

proper and loving burial. But besides the ointments Mary has brought much more to the tomb with her. Mary has brought her devastation. She has brought her broken heart. She has brought her state of shock and her dashed dreams. And perhaps most of all she has brought with her her love for Jesus.

And in a single instant everything changes for her too. Jesus simply says her name, “Mary!” the way he always said her name and in that nanosecond she knew, “It’s the Lord! He lives!” In that instant resurrection was born in her and for her. All the disillusionment is gone. In that moment she is truly free, full of joy, bursting with life anew. There is suddenly light again where before there had been only painful darkness. Love—has conquered after all. Love is stronger than death and in that moment all was changed upon the earth too, changed forever. His light does truly shine. His light has not been overcome. Love is stronger than death. And while sometimes we are still tempted to think that death is the extinguishing of a person’s light,; that thinking is not true. Death is rather turning off the lamp because the dawn has come. And in Jesus’ resurrection the dawn has come for us all.

What have you brought to this celebration of the tomb this day? What pain? What fears? What exhaustion? What brokenness? What disappointment? What hopelessness? Will you dare to ask the Risen Lord to speak your name? To shine his warm and healing light into the deep recesses of your soul? Will you dare to believe that He lives now never more to die and—that he reaches out to you and me as he reached out to all those souls and says the very same thing? “Come. Live with me.” “I am risen from the dead—even as I said.”

[Tonight we have two adults who seek baptism into the Catholic faith. They come here in hope and excitement. They bring their hope for a new beginning in Jesus Christ. They recognize that the sins of their past will be washed away in these waters of baptism. They will be confirmed in their faith and then receive their Eucharistic Lord. We might even hit them up for collection. But I ask you to bid them welcome into our community of faith here at Saint Anthony’s.]