

Homily040118

WHOM ARE YOU LOOKING FOR? JESUS IS NOT HERE!

I want to play for you a two minute script ostensibly from the lips of Mary Magdalen. It is imaginative and is part of a series produced by the Society of Jesus in Great Britain on the role of women in the life of Christ. Please listen:

When first I heard that short account it moved me quite deeply. I had no difficulty believing that Mary Magdalen could have thought those thoughts or said those words. Ironically in next week's gospel Mary Magdalen will actually hear her prayer answered when the person she thinks is the gardener turns out to be Jesus and says her Name. In an instant her despair and confusion is transformed into the greatest of all joys. The crucified One is dead no longer. He is right here! He is speaking to me now! He is saying my name—again. Because he knows my name. He knows all our names.

A couple of weeks back when I was in the Holy Land I was blessed to be able to spend an hour sitting on a bench at the site of Calvary. As I prayed the sorrowful mysteries I heard our Lady speak a word in my soul. It was very simple. Her words and his words are always very simple. She said: "I died here too." It made me cry. Yes, she died there too. Her own soul a sword DID pierce. But it did not end there. No. Actually it began there.

What began there was the beginning of the new creation that God the Father had promised to our original parents when they sinned because of their lack of trust and their disobedient hearts. Eve allowed herself to be talked into something she rather wanted to do. Then she appealed to Adam that it would be okay. And he went along. Their infidelity ruined everything. It unleashed a selfish spirit into our world, a spirit of disharmony and destruction. It affected all of humanity but all of creation too.

God would send his Beloved to take on our flesh and become one of us like us in all things but sin. The woman led the man into sin. The new woman, Mary of Nazareth, would lead the world into grace because she was "full of grace" and she would allow God's own Spirit to overshadow her and conceive in her womb the One who would lead us out of slavery into the new creation. And there was Mary Magdalen and the other women keeping vigil, tending the wounds, not abandoning the One who had been sent. There is Mary Magdalen yearning, in her helplessness, to hear Jesus say her name again. And because she loved she heard his call to her.

Love can do that. LOVE DOES DO THAT. That is what is so strikingly new in all of this Easter confusion. The power of love has not only been revealed; it has been unleashed and that power has the power to make all things new. That power has the power to transform the face of the earth. And because love is personal and we are persons, we all have an opportunity to share in what Jesus has accomplished. He is risen after he died. We too will rise—on the last day. But I will tell you a secret. Just as Mary spoke about her own dying on Calvary. She rose with him too that Easter Sunday morn. The secret is that we died too on Calvary's heights. And we have already been raised up. We too are risen as He is risen. It is for us to dare to believe the truth of what I just said.

Two weeks ago I saw the empty tomb. I put my hands on it and prayed. It too made me cry, not the first person ever to weep at the tomb of Christ. But I have been raised up. Not because I went there and not because I am a priest. I have been raised up because I have been baptized into Jesus Christ just as you have. I have died with him and I have been raised up with him by his Father. And so have all of you. Whether you fully realize it yet.

You have been baptized into Christ and you live in Him. Christ in turn, has chosen to embrace you and to lay his hands upon you and chosen to take hold of you—for all time. You are his. You have died with him. You now live with him. Do not be afraid—of anything. Do not be afraid--of anyone. Not even the evil one for his power has been destroyed. His power is the power of death and it is over. His realm was the realm of death and it has been entered by Jesus Christ that Holy Saturday to bring forth anyone and everyone who hardened not their hearts when they heard his voice. The gates of hell have not prevailed against the Body of Christ in His Head and Members.

Jesus is not in the grave. Do not look for him among the dead. He lives! He goes before us. Into Galilee. But more. He goes before us into our world. If you would find him, go out from here in faith and then come back to be fed. Then go out again. Until you find him, encounter him, love him, and follow him. He really does live. Believe it! Go forth and EXPECT to meet him. And you will. I have. Many have. You are called. Dare to believe. Happy Easter!