

DAY 17: EASTER SUNDAY – THE LORD IS RISEN!

Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ
you transformed the tomb of death
into the womb of new life:
make us joyful witnesses of this good news
that all creation may be redeemed,
restored and reconciled;
for you live and reign,
In the unity of the Blessed Trinity,
One God, in glory everlasting. Amen

Scripture Readings: Acts 10:34-43; Psalm 118; Colossians 3:1-4; John 20:1-9

Reflection: In the reading from the Acts of the Apostles, we see St Peter in the house of Cornelius, a Roman centurion living in Caesarea, and who had recently converted to the faith. Peter speaks to Cornelius and the members of his household about the Risen Lord, making it clear that Peter himself is a witness to all that he speaks of. He affirms the divinity of Jesus Christ who had sent him and the other disciples to spread the Good News. Peter declares that Jesus was able to work miracles, to cast aside the devil, and to forgive sins, because of God the Father and the Holy Spirit. Peter also declares that Jesus is the only judge who judges not only the living but the dead also. It is clear that Peter has overcome his denials in the high priest's courtyard and is now proclaiming the Good News. The gospel tells of the finding of the empty tomb and the four gospels agree that the discovery was made by some of the women who accompanied Jesus and his followers. In the case of St John's Gospel, he only names Mary Magdalene going to the tomb. This, and the fact that it is still in the darkness of the early morning, highlights the fact that the women have come to the Lord's tomb to visit the Lord's resting place and mourn for him, or perhaps to remove the blood-stained cloth and dress the body in clean linens, at the first opportunity they had to do either. In any case, they discover the empty tomb and return to the rest of the group where Mary Magdalene tells Peter and the others that the Lord's body is missing. At this stage in the account she doesn't mention resurrection and so Peter and John, and perhaps some of the others, rush to the tomb to see for themselves. The tomb is indeed empty with only the burial cloths left behind. While John reached the tomb first it is Peter who enters first – perhaps John is afraid or perhaps he recognises that Peter is now the leader of the group. In contrast to Peter, and in particular contrast to St Thomas which we will read of next week, John sees the scene and recognition comes to him immediately: Jesus has risen from the dead. Nobody witnessed the resurrection and none of the evangelists attempted to say how it happened, but all testify that Jesus has risen from the dead with the empty tomb being the key item of proof.

Concluding Prayer

Give thanks to the Lord for he is good; his love endures for ever. Let Israel say: his love endures for ever. Let the house of Aaron say: his love endures for ever. Let those who fear the Lord say: his love endures for ever. Amen (Psalm 118:1-4)

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all for ever. Amen