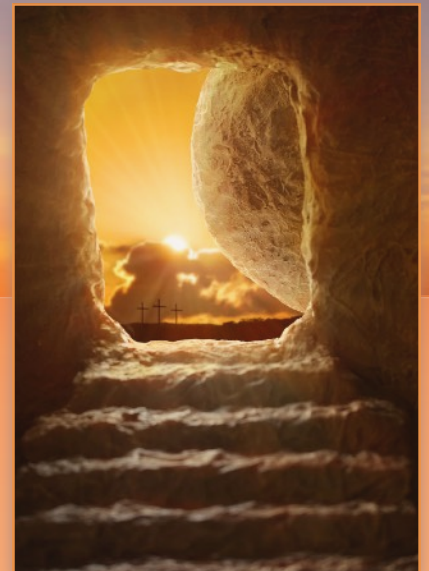


Impact

Bring faith to life. Find life in faith.



WE HAVE ALL BEEN THERE

Confused. Angry. Fearful. Grief-stricken. Disappointed. Hopeless.

We know the fatigue, emptiness, and darkness that accompanies moments of extreme turmoil. The women who came to Jesus' tomb were likely filled with all of these emotions, and more.

They had found love in Jesus' eyes, acceptance, and value. They had believed that he was the long-awaited Messiah, and when they were with him, they found themselves imagining, "what if?" *What if* Jesus was sent by God to bring justice and freedom from oppression? *What if* the healings, feedings, and teaching were only a glimpse of the reign of God? *What if* all they experienced in Jesus' presence could be known and spread throughout the world? *What if* they were to be part of making it so?

It was only a few short days ago that all of their dreams still seemed possible. And then, Jesus was

arrested, mocked, scourged, and brutally murdered. And their dreams died on the cross with him. Still, in their grief and fear, they came to the tomb, to anoint the body of the one they hoped was the Anointed of God.

Incredibly, suddenly, everything changed. The tomb was empty. "What if?" became "It is just as he said!" Minds and hearts racing, they rushed to tell the disciples.

From that moment on, we have known that Christ is with us in the midst of our deepest darkness, and that the love of God and power of the risen Lord is greater than all of the difficulties we experience in this earthly life.

NOTHING WILL EVER BE THE SAME

He is risen. The stone has been thrown away. Have you suddenly recognized Christ, when new life, possibilities, and dreams emerge from your darkest times?

Suddenly...the clouds lift and sunlight pours in, brightening your spirit and bringing fresh perspective. Suddenly... a friend calls, a job is offered, medical treatment is finished. Suddenly... the truth of Christ's presence in the Eucharist is known in a flash of insight. Suddenly... your offer of forgiveness is accepted, your visit with an elderly friend is cherished, your service appreciated.

Jesus' resurrection breaks the power of death. "It is the mystery of the thrown-away stone, that ends up being the cornerstone of our existence," Pope Francis said last Easter. Through Christ's passion, death, and resurrection, we are assured that no confusion, fear, or grief is beyond the reach of God's eternal plan of love.

“The community of believers was of one heart and mind, and no one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they had everything in common. With great power the apostles bore witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great favor was accorded them all. There was no needy person among them...[their resources] were distributed to each according to need.” (Acts 4:32-36)

In these weeks of the Easter season, we hear the stories of the early believers in the first reading each Sunday, from the Acts of the Apostles. The followers of Jesus Christ, emblazoned by the power of the Holy Spirit, do signs and wonders; new believers are drawn into the fold; and the apostles are not only willing, but take heart in facing persecution in Jesus’ name. Each account tells the story of God’s grace in action, and of the stewardship of the followers of Jesus. These stories also inspire us, and urge us to continue to commit ourselves as disciples and stewards. A steward is one who recognizes that all we are, have and will be is a gift from God. In fact, our very lives and all that we have been given is grace – a sign of and the very presence of God in our lives. Coming to appreciate that the life and love of the Risen Christ are planted within us helps us to respond as good stewards – as people who care for and nurture the grace of God, so that it will bear fruit that endures. Being stewards in this way is sure to touch the lives of others, just as Christ was “made real” by

the early believers through their actions and words. We are told that “many signs and wonders were done among the people at the hands of the apostles.” (Acts 5:12-16) **What “signs and wonders” are you capable of, when you allow God to work through you as you give yourself and your resources as a good steward?**

IMPACT THIS MONTH

BE ATTENTIVE

Notice the blessings and grace of life, love, gifts, friendship, and meaning in your life.

THANK GOD

Say a prayer of thanksgiving for this grace and blessing.

INVITE GOD

Ask God to guide you as you discern how you might nurture, witness, and share this grace with others.

COMMIT TO ACT

Make a commitment to act on your discernment. Share this with another. Ask him or her to hold you accountable.

*The article at the top of this page was previously published by Our Sunday Visitor, and is used here with permission.

HOPE IN THE CROSS AND RESURRECTION OF THE LORD

Why do we wear crucifix or hang one on a wall? People sometimes ask why Catholic Christians have a corpus, the body of the crucified Christ, on their cross. Does this deny the resurrection? We wear and honor the symbol of Jesus’ death, the cross, not only because he suffered and died there, but because he conquered it. The cross is our Christian sign of hope – hope in our new life in Christ.

In today’s world, Christians face challenges, even persecution, for our beliefs and the actions that result from our Christian faith. It is all the more important that today, and for these coming days of the Easter season, we celebrate the resurrection. We celebrate the fact that Jesus triumphed over evil, death, and persecution. That sacrifice saves us from our wayward ways, all the times that we fail to live as God’s good and holy people. Christ’s sacrifice is the ultimate act of mercy. On the cross, Jesus’ “arms were stretched between heaven and earth in an everlasting sign” of God’s great love. (Eucharistic prayer for Reconciliation I)

Especially during the Easter season, we celebrate and must live the very truth that Christ died and rose and lives in and through us today, through the power of the Holy Spirit. The resurrection brings with it a great responsibility. We are to be Christ’s hands and feet, the ones that were pierced through suffering and sacrifice.

Christ’s sacrifice calls us to give of ourselves more than we think we are able.

Christ’s resurrection insures us that in doing so, we will find new life in living Christ’s mission of love.

What sacrifice are you called to make to carry out Christ’s mission?

What will you do with your new life?

