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EASTER DAY

Homily of the Right Reverend Dom Jean PATEAU
Abbot of Our Lady of Fontgombault
(Fontgombault, April 9th, 2023)

Surrexit, non est hic.
He is risen: He is not here.
(*Mk 16:6*)

Dear Brothers and Sisters,
My dearly beloved Sons,

IN A FEW WORDS of a quite heavenly simplicity, the angel of the resurrection, under the guise of a young man in white clothes, reveals to the women the secret of the tomb. Christ is risen. He has overcome death. He is no longer here.

For Mary Magdalene, for Mary mother of James, and for Salome, the way that opens before them is much less simple. They would no doubt have preferred to find the lifeless body of their Master. As they embalmed Him, they would have shown with a delicate attention their skills, and most of all their wounded love. Everything having been carried out, they would have found peace. It would have been so simple!

Such was not the divine plan. Could Christ, Who is the way, the truth, and the life, stop on His way? Could He remain prisoner from a tomb? Life crossed the gates of death, but death could not hold it prisoner. In the heart of a tomb, life has lain. In the heart of a tomb, life has freed itself. Truth never dies.

The holy women came to the tomb with the certainty of finding a corpse. They go back with a secret and a mission. What a surprise! What an emotion! The angel tries nonetheless to reassure them:

You seek Jesus of Nazareth, Who was crucified. He is risen:
He is not here. Behold the place where they laid Him. But go,
tell His disciples and Peter that He goeth before you into Galilee.
There you shall see Him, as He told you.^a

a. *Mk* 16:6-7.

Despite a call for faith, despite the reminder of the promise
Christ had made to the disciples on the evening of the last meal
shared with them, the holy women,

going out, fled from the sepulchre: for a trembling and fear
had seized them. And they said nothing to any man: for they
were afraid.^b

b. *Ibid.*, v. 8.

Are these words of St. Mark, which according to some ex-
egesetes constituted the last verses of his Gospel, to be understood
literally? Do they express the first reaction of women who have
been frightened after an unexpected encounter? Or wouldn't
they rather be the expression of the reverential fear that is kindled
in the heart of man by the contact with the mighty deeds of
God's power? In the twinkling of an eye, everything becomes
clear for the women: He is risen, truly risen. The incredible has
happened. But the announcement has been too quick. They
have to flee, to run away, so as to find back their peace, and try
to understand.

The angel entrusts the women with a secret and a mission.
A secret: the Crucified One is no longer here, He is risen. A
mission: go and bring the good news to the disciples and Peter:
"He goeth before you into Galilee. There you shall see Him, as
He told you."

The reception by the disciples will be at the very least tepid:
"They were mourning and weeping,"^c and faith will be con-
spicuously lacking: "They refused to believe."^d

c. *Ibid.*, v. 10.

d. *Ibid.*, v. 11.

Wouldn't we bear some resemblance to the women and dis-
ciples? On this Easter morning, the Church entrusts us once
again with a secret and a mission. No one seems to have gone
out, no one has fled at the announcement of the Lord's resurrec-
tion. We believe that Christ is risen, and that today, He lives with
His glorified humanity beside the Father. But shouldn't the wo-
men's reaction be an incitement to take the measure and weight
of our faith? There are beliefs that, as time goes by, crumble

away, and vanish like smoke. The Lord's resurrection might well take place among those. Do we have in our hearts the reverential fear which incites us to live as Christians, namely as disciples of the Risen One? This fear is a prerequisite for receiving the secret of the Lord's resurrection. Then we shall be able to take our pilgrim's staff and go on mission to share this good news with the world.

We need not yearn for a long journey. The Lord has set up the appointment: Galilee, our own Galilee. Galilee is the place of quiet and simple exchanges, the place of solitary conversations, the time of heart-to-heart talks with Jesus. Our Galilee is also the place of our humdrum daily life, from which we so easily flee. Madeleine Delbrel said: "My God, if You are everywhere, how come I am so often elsewhere?" Our Galilee is our family life, our community life, our school, our workplace, our home. All these places and all these times, which we have the mission to transform by the good news of the Lord's resurrection.

Last March 21st, our Archbishop, the Most Reverend Jérôme Beau, blessed the oratory dedicated to St. Louis and Zélie Martin, which has been erected in the small garden at the centre of the families guest-house. Louis and Zélie are for all couples models of everyday holiness, a holiness forged out in mutual faithfulness and love, in the joys of family life, and also in its sorrows, such as sickness for both of them, or the loss of four of their children who died in infancy. Louis and Zélie Martin remained trusting in and faithful to the will of God, unfaltering witnesses to the Risen Christ Whom they served. At the end of his address, Archbishop Beau expressed the wish that many couples come and seek grace and comfort from the Martin spouses. On this Easter morning, I can but echo this call, as I invite you to beseech from the Risen Christ, through Louis and Zélie's intercession, a grace of Easter peace and reconciliation for your own families, and for all families. The Litanies of the holy spouses are awaiting you there... All you have to do now is recite them.

As a conclusion, let us evoke another visit of the Risen Christ, one ignored by the evangelists, but perpetuated by tradition, that of the Risen Christ to His Mother. St. John Paul II wrote: ^a

*a. Audience,
May 21, 1997.*

Indeed, it is legitimate to think that His Mother was probably the first person to whom the Risen Jesus appeared. Could not

† *Mk* 16:1;
Mt 28:1.

Mary's absence from the group of women who went to the tomb at dawn † indicate that she had already met Jesus?

[...] It seems reasonable to think that Mary, as the image and model of the Church which waits for the Risen One and meets Him in the group of disciples during His Easter appearances, had had a personal contact with her Risen Son, so that she too could delight in the fullness of paschal joy.

§ Cf. *Jn* 29:25.

‡ Cf. *Acts* 1:14.

Present at Calvary on Good Friday § and in the Upper Room on Pentecost, ‡ the Blessed Virgin too was probably a privileged witness of Christ's resurrection, completing in this way her participation in all the essential moments of the Paschal mystery. Welcoming the Risen Jesus, Mary is also a sign and an anticipation of humanity, which hopes to achieve its fulfilment through the resurrection of the dead.

During these holy days, let us therefore keep walking on our road, in the school of Mary. Let us commune with the joy of the definitive victory of light over darkness, of life over death. Let us persevere in hope, and in the expectation of the full light of eternity.

Holy Easter. Amen, Alleluia.

