

The Empty Tomb – An Easter Reflection on “Hope”

How can one hope in the face of loss – in the face of a tomb, or worse yet, an empty tomb?

Let us contemplate the following gospel account this Easter Sunday:

“But Mary stayed outside the tomb weeping. And as she wept, she bent over into the tomb and saw two angels in white sitting there, one at the head and one at the feet where the body of Jesus had been. And they said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?” She said to them, “They have taken my Lord, and I don’t know where they laid him.” When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus there, but did not know it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Who are you looking for?” She thought it was the gardener and said to him, “Sir, if you carried him away, tell me where you laid him, and I will take him.” Jesus said to her, “Mary!” She turned and said to him in Hebrew, “Rabbouni,” which means Teacher. Jesus said to her, “Stop holding on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and tell them, “I am going to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.” Mary of Magdala went and announced to the disciples, “I have seen the Lord,” and what he told her.” (John 20: 11-18)

What relevance does this hold for us today? Perhaps, particularly at a time when the world is facing an unprecedented global spread of the Covid-19 pandemic, the sense of loss is uncomfortably real and close to our hearts; the loss of someone, income, lifestyle and even the freedom to leave our homes to socialise, to name a few.

Take a few moments to slowly and prayerfully read the gospel passage again, and visualise yourself as part of the gospel scene. *What loss or grief are you experiencing? Big or small, begin to name each loss without judgment. Speak to Jesus about them as you would with a close friend, sharing your innermost feelings and thoughts, and listen to his response. How might Jesus be calling you and offering you hope? How can you share this hope with others, as Mary of Magdala was commissioned by Jesus to do?*

As we celebrate Easter Sunday, let us pray for all who have lost sight of hope and for ourselves. May we hear ever more clearly the voice of Jesus calling out to us, even in places where we may not, at first, have recognised him. Like Mary of Magdala, may our personal encounter with the risen Christ transform any anxiety, disorientation and despair into a deep experience of peace, re-direction and hope. Just as new life can spring forth from death, may the current losses that we suffer gain also for us new ways of living, new ways of seeing and loving our world.

Today, remember also to soak in and share the grace of this Easter joy – *sing a song of praise, send a friend a message of hope, or anything Christian you may feel called to do (always within the limits of the circuit-breaker guidelines!)* Now is not a time for despair – indeed, we are an Easter people and Alleluia is our song! ***Blessed Easter Joy to you and your loved ones!***

Suggested Scripture Reflection:

John 20:11-18

John 21:1-14

Suggested Spiritual Reading:

https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2020/03/27/read-pope-francis-urbi-et-orbi-address-coronavirus-and-jesus-calming-storm?fbclid=IwAR15msppECxILAjRPIN_jbPTZW2rNkbSBC1MdAzeusv6zcJMnPCjsluUo

