

EASTER SEASON

(J.F.M.H. - 5.4.2018)

After Christ had been laid in the tomb, the Jewish authorities wanted to secure it so a large stone was rolled over the entrance, and guards were posted to prevent anyone taking away His body and then claiming He is risen. Mary Magdalene and Mary, the Mother of James and Salome were wondering who would roll away the stone for them so that they could anoint the body of Our Lord. It was the morning of the first Easter day. When they arrived, the women saw that the stone had already been rolled back.

St. Mark gives an account of what happened then. *“Entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, dressed in a white robe; and they were amazed. And he said to them “Do not be amazed; you seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He is risen, He is not here; see the place where they laid Him. But go tell His disciples and Peter that He is going before you to Galilee; there you will see Him, as He told you. And they went out and fled from the tomb; for trembling and astonishment had come upon them; and they said nothing to anyone for they were afraid.”* (Mk.16.5-8)

St. John adds another detail. *“ She (Mary Magdalene) ran, and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him.” Peter then came out with the other disciple. And they went towards the tomb. They both ran, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first; and stooping to look in, he saw the linen cloths lying there, but he did not go in. Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb; he saw the linen cloths lying, and the napkin, which had been on His head, not lying with the linen cloths, but rolled up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and He saw and believed; for as yet they did not know the scripture, that he must rise from the dead. Then the disciples went back to their homes.”* (John 20.2-10)

Every Easter the Church proclaims; *“On the third day He rose again from the dead.”* The Catechism of the Catholic Church paragraphs 638-658 gives an account of Christ’s Resurrection and shows its importance. They are well worth reading. They show how the Resurrection, Christ’s great victory and triumph over sin and death, was so unostentatious. What a contrast to His public and terrible death on the cross, though how very like the way Our Lord chose to be a witness to His Almighty Father for most of His life. We know of the Resurrection only through His Church, and even then only as Christ having risen. The actual Resurrection itself has been depicted by many artists, but the possible witnesses, the soldiers who were sent to guard the tomb, were silent, perhaps silenced is a better description. They took the money offered by the Chief Priest and Elders, who told them to tell people,

that His disciples came by night and stole Him away while we were asleep.” However the Resurrection was real. Death could not, and had not severed the Human nature from the Divine Person. The Risen Christ is with His Church still in the Blessed Sacrament.

The account of Our Lord’s life on earth given in the Gospels is, by and large, a hidden one. It was only in the last three years of it that He carried out His public Ministry. At the end of that His death by crucifixion was very public indeed. Even when He was on the cross He was invited to show His power and might by saving Himself and the two thieves crucified with Him, by coming down from the cross, but refused to be tempted. He had accepted His death and terrible torture for our sins and for love of us. He was not to be deflected from this.

At least it would have seemed a sensible thing to show His might and glory by rising spectacularly on the third day as He had promised. But His Resurrection too was a hidden event. Men had to believe in it from the witness of those who saw the empty tomb, and those who saw Him alive during the 40 days he remained on earth before ascending to His Father in heaven. That glorious event too, was witnessed only by a few. Surely the 40 days He spent on earth after His Resurrection, was a period when His glory would show through to all men, but this also remains mysteriously hidden. The details of where He was and how He spent the time we know very little. He appeared in a number of different places sometimes to a few, at other times to many. Some fourteen of these apparitions are recorded. Even His appearance seemed to be filled with secrecy and concealment. When He appeared to the two disciples going to Emmaus, He disclosed His identity only as He was vanishing. When He showed Himself to Mary Magdalene she thought he was a gardener. She only knew Him when He used her name. When He appeared at the lake to the disciples in the fishing boat, at first they did not know who it was and when it flashed upon them, they cried, “*It is the Lord.*” This concealment of Himself was so unlike the way sinful man in his pride would behave. However, it was very like the rest of the hidden life of Our Lord.

In the Blessed Sacrament we see with our eyes nothing of the glory He has in heaven. We could not bear it if we did. Instead of the worship of sight in His heavenly glory, He chose the worship of faith below on earth. Once again it is a hidden life He has chosen. What love He shows, what an example He continues to provide to all who try and identify with the Sacred Host.