

EASTER SUNDAY – 12th April 2020

HE HAS RISEN FROM THE DEAD AND IS GOING AHEAD OF YOU INTO GALILEE - Biblical
Commentary by Father Alberto Maggi OSM

Matthew 28,1-10

After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb.

There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men.

The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples: 'He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.' Now I have told you."

So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples. Suddenly Jesus met them. "Greetings," he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and worshiped him. Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me."

No evangelist describes Jesus' resurrection. In fact, the known traditional classic image of the triumphant Christ coming out of the tomb does not belong to the Gospels, but to a second-century apocryphal, called the Gospel of Peter. But all the evangelists give indications on how to meet the living Christ. The experience of the risen Christ, in fact, was not a privilege granted two thousand years ago to a small group of people, but a possibility for believers of all times. Let's see what Matthew tells us about it, in chapter 28, the chapter of the resurrection. "*After the Sabbath,..*" here the evangelist begins with a notation: the precept of the observance of the Sabbath has delayed the primitive community to experience the risen Christ.

"After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week,.." the first day recalls the first day of creation, with Jesus the new definitive creation of the week is realized. The first day of the week, is the eighth day, and the number eight, in the early church, will be the number that will have the meaning of the risen Christ, and it is in fact the number of the beatitudes. "*Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb.*" a woman is missing; at the crucifixion of Jesus there were three women present: Mary of Magdala, the other Mary, the mother of James and Joseph, but there was also the mother of the sons of Zebedee. Where is she? This ambitious woman, who wanted glory, success for her children, when she sees that her Messiah dies, she has lost all hope, therefore she will not witness the resurrection

"There was a violent earthquake,.." an earthquake, in the Bible, is a sign of divine manifestation *"...for an angel of the Lord..."* an angel of the Lord is not meant as an angel sent by the Lord, but God when he comes into contact with man. In this Gospel it appears three times: to announce the

life of Jesus, to protect it from the murderous aims of Herod, and to confirm it and now, when life comes from God, it is indestructible. *"..an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it."* sitting on it is a sign of conquest. Unlike the women, who, in the previous chapter, the evangelist told us that they had sat in front of the grave in mourning, the angel sits on the stone in a sign of victory. *" His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow."* they are the same descriptions as Jesus' transfiguration and the colors of divine glory

"The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men." there is the irruption of the fullness of life, but those who belong to the world of death, for them it is not a life experience, but they sink even more into death. The evangelist is ironic, because what they thought was dead is actually alive, and those who were alive, he says are like dead, are dead. But *"The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid..."* this is strange, because the guards are afraid, and the angel instead ignores them and turns to the women, he says *"Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified."* that is, the cursed one who was considered dead by a divine curse, *" He is not here;..."* The angel does not say he is no longer here, (but) he is not here: the sepulcher could never contain the one who was the living, *".. he has risen, .."* and here is a veiled reproach, *".. just as he said."* he had said it a good three times *"Come and see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples: 'He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee."* Galilee is important in the narrative of the resurrection, it will appear three times *" There you will see him."* this verb to see is the same that appeared in the beatitudes: blessed are the pure in heart, and does not indicate physical sight, but a deep inner experience. Jesus resurrected in this gospel, the gospel of Matthew, will never be manifested in Jerusalem, the murderous city, the city which, from the beginning, is under a cloak of darkness, but, to see Jesus, to experience him, one must go to Galilee, that is, the place of his preaching.

"So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy,..." they abandon the sepulcher, which could never contain the living, great joy takes over, *"..and ran to tell.."* the term announcement, in Greek, contains the root of the word angel. Women, considered beings furthest from God, are actually the closest, they perform the same function as the angels, *"..and ran to tell his disciples.."* this indicates surprise, *" Suddenly Jesus met them. "* when you go to communicate and announce life, there is always the Lord who comes to meet you, to strengthen, with his presence, the announcement, here the translation is *"Greetings," he said."* is should actually be "rejoice", why? At the end of the beatitudes, in the last beatitude, that of the persecuted, Jesus had said: rejoice because your reward in heaven is great. Here is the reward: an indestructible life, a life capable of overcoming death

"They came to him, clasped his feet and worshiped him." the feet indicate a real and physical encounter, is not a spirit encounter. The fact that they worshiped him (it means) that they recognize in him the fullness of the divine condition. *"Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee;"* for the first time the disciples are called Jesus' brothers *"..there they will see me."* Why is it possible to see Jesus in Galilee? We will see later that the disciples will go to Galilee on *"the mountain that Jesus had indicated to them"*. But Jesus did not indicate any mountain. What is this mountain? It is the mountain of the beatitudes. What is the evangelist's message then? By living, accepting the beatitudes, fully manifesting the good news of Jesus, there is the possibility to experience, to meet in one's life, the one who is living.

