

FIVE MINUTE SERMON

BY REV. WILLIAM DEMOY, D. D.
EASTER SUNDAY

THE RISEN LORD

"At that time; Mary Magdalen and Mary the mother of James and Salome brought sweet spices, that cometh they might anoint Jesus." (Mark xvi, 1)

It must have been a disappointment to the two holy women spoken of in today's Gospel, when they arrived at the tomb of Jesus and discovered that He was not there. Yet it must have caused their hearts to delight exceedingly when they learned that He had risen, as He had said, and would appear before them in Galilee. They loved Him sincerely, and naturally they would rejoice at His blessings and especially at this great glory of His Resurrection. No doubt they thought little of themselves—though a good deed of itself brings satisfaction—but their whole minds and affections were turned toward their Saviour. This affords us a good example to follow now, after having, during the season of Lent and in a particular manner during Holy Week, sympathized with Jesus and felt His sufferings as much as within us. The season of sadness closes and we again may take part in the gladness of the life around us; but we must not forget Our Saviour. We need not go to the tomb, as we know He is risen, but we can ask Him to appear to us spiritually, and fill us with the holy sentiments experienced by Mary Magdalen when she beheld Him.

He will not refuse us this blessing, if our hearts are worthy of it. It is His delight to come to us and to dwell in our midst, if He finds a fit habitation. We can prepare such a dwelling-place for Him, and at this moment we should be of such dispositions as to be able to invite Him to a pleasant abode within us. He has done for us all that man could do, and all that a God should do, even considering the magnitude of His mercy. What ungrateful creatures we are, if we have not a clean heart to offer Him as a place where He may dwell. The benefits He gained for us by His sufferings and finally by His Resurrection, are needed by each one of us. Had He not come upon earth and undergone His passion, we would now be in the state of those who lived before He wrought the work of Redemption. We might have been among the very Pharisee; and others who were hard of heart. After His generous demonstration of love, let us not be among the classes of the modern Pharisees. He may be waiting somewhere for us, yearning for us, desirous of appearing before us. Are we fit to be told by an angel, as was done to the two Marys, that He will appear to us?

Far too easily do people forget the intense, burning love that Jesus has for them. Of course, this is easy to understand, as they can not see Him face to face; but what our senses fail to teach us regarding Him, our minds and hearts should keep vividly before us. There are too few who strive to keep the thought of Jesus in their hearts. It would be a pleasure to behold Jesus with our eyes, greet Him as we do those whom we love upon earth, but He has kept from us this privilege here to give it to us in the kingdom beyond. Even those who beheld Him when He lived upon earth, did not see Him in His glory any more than we do. So they were not blessed much more than we, as far as seeing Christ as He really is concerned. We understand Him even better than did they—though it is nearing two thousand years since He walked the earth.

This great feast of Easter will be for us, as it has been for millions in the past, a day or a time of great rejoicing, but alas, of what kind! It will not be the pure, unalloyed joy of the two Marys when they learned in truth of Christ's triumph. It will be mixed with very much of what is foreign to God's love, to say the least. The world has adopted it as a time of special material ostentation, and the stylish gowns and the bright colors are put on—not to appear worthily garbed before Christ but to answer to the glad callings of the most beautiful of seasons—spring—and to offer an incense at the shrine of Dame Fashion. Oh, what a forgetful people, even in their innocence! They let slip by the most appropriate of occasions to show God their especial love, their greatest delight, and to appear before Him clad in the spotless robes of innocence. They do not, like the lilies of the field, raise their white splendor skyward, lift their hearts pure and childlike to their Risen Lord. How they should remember that the work Christ consummated is most necessary to them today, nay, as necessary as if it were just happening! Christ died long years ago, but He died for us of the present as much as for those who lived in His time, and the same will be true of future generations. He rose for us as well, and gave us thereby the right, if we do our duty, to rise "like unto Him."

We have time to think. Let us do so, rooting from our minds and hearts thoughts and desires other than those which send us searching for our Risen Lord. He is waiting for us somewhere along life's journey. As we pass Him, if He finds us as He did the penitent Mary, He will show Himself to us in such a way that we shall know we are in His presence. To the Risen Christ,

then, our thoughts should go at this holy season, our hearts should exult over Him, and we should yearn to be forever with Him when He wills the end of our days.

FIRST EASTER MORN

The English translation of Giovanni Papini's "Life of Christ," made by Dorothy Canfield Fisher for Harcourt, Brace & Co., was published on March 23. No book of a similar kind has created an equal sensation in Europe since Renan published his "Vie de Jesus," sixty years ago. It is significant that in the year when Renan's centenary is being observed, a new Story of the Saviour should be given to the world by one who, having wandered far beyond Renan in the paths of negation and atheism, retraces all his steps by this splendid act of faith and love. The following is the story of the first Easter Morn as told in Papini's work:

By Giovanni Papini

The sun had not yet risen on the day which for us is Sunday, when the women once more drew near to the garden; but over the eastern hills a white hope, light as the distant reflection of an earth clothed with lilies and silver, rose slowly in the midst of the throbbing constellations, vanquishing little by little the sparkling brilliance of the night. It was one of those calm dawns, suggesting innocents asleep, and the clear benign air seemed stirred as by a recent stir of angels' wings. It seemed one of the virginal days, ushered in with transparent pallor, shy and cheerful with cool breezes.

In the half light, the women advanced, breathed upon by wandering airs, lost in their sadness, under the spell of an emotion they could not have explained. Were they returning to weep upon the rock? Or to see Him once more, He who had captured their hearts without laying them waste? Or to put about the body of the Immaculate One spices stronger than those of Nicodemus? And speaking among themselves, they said, "Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre?"

There were four of them, since Joanna of Cusa and Salome had joined Mary of Magdala and Mary of Bethany, but they were women and weakened by their sorrow. But when they came to the rock they stood still, astounded. The opening into the sepulchre showed black against the darkness. Not believing her eyes, the boldest of them touched the sill with her trembling hands. In the daylight, brightening now with every moment, they saw the stone there beside them, leaning against the rocks.

The women, struck into silence by their fright, turned around as if expecting someone to come to tell them what had happened in those two nights which had passed. Mary of Magdala feared at once that the Jews, not satisfied with what they had made Him suffer when He was alive, had stolen away the body of Christ; or perhaps unwilling to have the honorable sepulchre used by a heretic, they had thrown Him into the shameful common grave used for men stoned and crucified. But this was no more than a presentiment. Perhaps Jesus was still lying inside in His perfumed wrappings. Enter they dared not, yet they could not bear to go away, not knowing what had happened. As soon as the sun, risen at last above the summit of the hills, shone into the opening of the sepulchre, they took courage and entered.

"HE IS RISEN"

At first they saw nothing, but they were shaken by a new fear. At their right, seated, was a young man clothed in a long white garment, showing in that darkness like snow. He seemed to be awaiting them.

"Be not affrighted: He is not here; for He is risen. Why seek ye the living among the dead? Remember how He spake unto you when He was yet in Galilee, saying, The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again."

The women listened, terrified and trembling, not able to answer, but the youth went on, "Go quickly, and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead; and, behold, He goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see Him."

All four of them, quivering with terror and joy, left the grotto to hasten where they had been sent. But after a few steps, when they were almost outside the garden, Mary of Magdala stopped, and the others went along the road towards the city without waiting for her. She herself did not know why she had remained behind. Perhaps the words of the unknown youth had not convinced her, and she remembered that they had not even made sure that the sepulchre was really empty; perhaps the youth in white was an accomplice of the priests who wished to deceive them.

Suddenly she turned and saw a man near her, outlined against the green of the garden, and the sunlight; but she did not recognize Him even when He spoke. "Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou?" Mary thought that it might be Joseph's gardener come early to his work. "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him. Sir, if thou have born Him hence, tell me

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where thou hast laid Him, and I will take Him away." The unknown man, touched by this impassioned candor, by this childlike simplicity, answered only one word, spoke only one name, her name, pronounced longingly, wistfully in the touching and unforgettable voice which had called her so many times: "Mary!"

At this, as if awakened with a start, the despairing woman found her lost Master, her Rabbini, Master! And she fell at His feet in the dewy grass and clasped in her hands those bare feet still showing the two red marks of the nails.

But Jesus said to her, "Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father; but go to My brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and to your God." And at once, He withdrew from the kneeling woman, and moved away among the plants, crowned with sunshine.

Mary watched Him until He had disappeared; then she lifted herself up from the grass, her face convulsed, wild, blind with joy, and ran after her companions.

They had but just come to the house where the Disciples were in hiding and they had told hastily and breathlessly the incredible news: the sepulchre opened, the youth clad in white, the things which he had said, the Master risen, the message to His brothers. But the men, still stunned by the catastrophe, and who in these dangerous days had shown themselves more torpid and passive than the weaker women, were not willing to believe this wildly improbable news. Hallucinations, women's dreams, they said. How could He be risen from the dead after only two days? He had said that He would return, but not at once: so many terrible things were to be seen before that day of His return!

They believed in the resurrection of the Master, but not before the day when all the dead would rise again, and He would come in glory to rule His kingdom. But not now: it was too soon, it could not be true; waking dreams of hysterical women!

MARY OF MAGDALA'S TESTIMONY

But in the meantime, Mary of Magdala rushed in, breathless with haste and agitation. What the others had said was all true. But there was more; she herself had seen Him with her own eyes, and He had spoken to her, and she had not known Him at once, but had recognized Him as soon as He had called her by name: she had touched His feet with her hands, had seen the wounds on His feet; it was He alive once more; and He had told her, as had the unknown youth, to go to His brethren, so that they should know that He had risen from the dead as He had promised.

Simon and John, finally aroused, rushed out of the house and began to run towards Joseph's garden. John who was younger, outran Peter and came first to the sepulchre. He looked through the door, saw the linen cloths lying on the ground, but did not go in. Simon came up panting and rushed into the grotto. The linen cloths were lying on the ground, but the napkin which had been about the head of the corpse was folded and wrapped together in a place by itself. John also went in, saw, and believed. And without another word they returned in all haste towards the house, still running as if they expected to find the Risen One in the midst of the others whom they had left.

THE RESURRECTION

Like a meteor, large and bright, Fell a golden seed of light. On the field of Christmas night, When the Babe was born. Then 'twas sepulchred in gloom, 'Till above His holy tomb, Flashed its everlasting bloom— Flower of Easter morn. —FATHER TABER

Let us love God, and everything, even God Himself, is ours. Even though we have been unfaithful in the past, yet if we turn to God from the very verge of the grave with an act of love, this will rehabilitate us and bring Him into our souls.

EASTER

Among the gay, exultant trees, Over the green and glowing grass, Clothed in immortal mysteries, I see His living body pass.

The catkins fling abroad His name, While birds from every bush and spray Strain feathered necks, and tipped with flame The hills all stand to greet His day.

Each violet and bluebell curled Wakes with the dead Christ's waking eye, And like burst gravestones clouds are hurled Across the wide and waiting sky.

And drenched, for very height of mirth, With clean white tears of April rain, Like Mary Magdalen the earth Finds April's risen Lord again.

—THEODORE MAYNARD

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