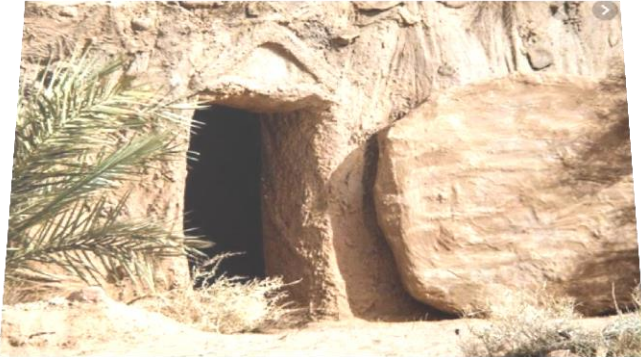


The Reflection from Pastor Fr. John Carlos, Holy Cross Church, Harrison, NJ, April 12, 2020

FIRST STONE TO BE MOVED



“Peter ran to the tomb” (*Lk 24:12*). What thoughts crossed Peter’s mind and stirred his heart as he ran to the tomb? The Gospel tells us that the eleven, including Peter, had not believed the testimony of the women, their Easter proclamation. Quite the contrary, “these words seemed to them an idle tale” (v. 11). Thus there was doubt in Peter’s heart, together with many other worries: sadness at the death of the beloved Master and disillusionment for having denied him three times during his Passion.

There is, however, something which signals a change in him: after listening to the women and refusing to believe them, “Peter rose” (v. 12). He did not remain sedentary, in thought; he did not stay at home as the others did. He did not succumb to the somber atmosphere of those days, nor was he overwhelmed by his doubts. He was not consumed by remorse, fear or the continuous gossip that leads nowhere. He was looking for Jesus, not himself. He preferred the path of encounter and trust. And so, he got up, just as he was, and ran towards the tomb from where he would return “amazed” (v. 12). This marked the beginning of Peter’s resurrection, the resurrection of his heart. Without giving in to sadness or darkness, he made room for hope: he allowed the light of God to enter into his heart, without smothering it.

We, like Peter, cannot discover life by being sad, bereft of hope. Let us not stay imprisoned within ourselves, but let us break open our sealed tombs to the Lord – each of us knows what they are – so that he may enter and grant us life. Let us give him the stones of our rancor and the boulders of our past, those heavy burdens of our weaknesses and falls. Christ wants to come and take us by the hand to bring us out of our anguish. This is the first stone to be moved aside: the lack of hope

which imprisons us within ourselves. May the Lord free us from this trap, from being Christians without hope, who live as if the Lord were not risen, as if our problems were the center of our lives.

We see and will continue to see problems both within and without. They will always be there. But it is important to shed the light of the Risen Lord upon our problems, and in a certain sense, to “evangelize” them. To evangelize our problems. Let us not allow darkness and fear to distract us and control us; we must cry out to them: the Lord “is not here, but has risen!” (v. 6). He is our greatest joy; he is always at our side and will never let us down.

He is risen, Alleluia.

Father John Carlos