

Easter 2017 SML  
JN 20:1-19

The life of Our Blessed Lord did not end at the Place of the Skull outside the walls of Jerusalem on the Friday called Good. Quite the contrary, little did any among those who looked on – whether they be those who laughed at Him, or those who cried for Him – even begin to suspect what was so humanly unsuspectable, yet divinely possible.

Not that He hadn't made it completely clear to them. Every warning He ever spoke of the upcoming Golgotha was punctuated with the remarkable and mysterious exclamation, "But after three days . . . ." In all His teaching, over and again, He pointed to that third day . . . .

Imagine the moment . . . in the darkness and stillness of the tomb, as heaven prayerfully awaited the moment . . . and hell's jubilation came to a screeching halt!

How exactly did it happen? How did life reenter a corpse that had been dead for three days? What happened first?

1. Did His Spirit return first?
2. And then His Sacred Heart fill with Precious Blood?
3. His nerves come alive?
4. His decaying tissue reconstruct?

The more you try to figure it out, the more baffling the miracle becomes.

Well, be that as it may, the third day, 2000 years ago, throughout all of Galilee and Judea, and all the ancient world over for that matter, it was a day much like any other day. I'd like to think it wasn't, that there was something different, something unusual, as there is tonight, Saturday, April 15, 2017 – tax day (this morning, Easter Sunday, April 16, 2017 – the day after tax day). For me, tonight (this morning), and every other Holy Saturday night (Easter morning) is different. I:

- ✓ walk out the same rectory front door,
- ✓ and look at the same Emmaus Center and trees to my left, Jackson Rd. to my right,
- ✓ and the Church straight ahead,

but Holy Saturday nights (Easter Sunday mornings) always feel different. There's something in the air, and that something is a presence brought on by the Risen Christ.

But truth be told, the third day, 2000 years ago, was a day like any other, much like the day Our Blessed Lord was first born. It was the morning after the Sabbath.

- ✓ Farmers rose early and dragged their plows into the fields.
- ✓ Children ran through the streets and alleys.

- ✓ Wives and mothers gathered at the river to scrub yesterday's dirt off tomorrow's clothes.
- ✓ The marketplaces filled with buyers and sellers,
- ✓ the roadways (buzzing) with chariots and donkey carts.

The third day was pretty much like any other day . . .

If I may be so bold . . . If it were you rising from the dead? If it were me rising from the dead on the third day? It would have been no ordinary day. It would not have been ordinary at all.

- ✓ I would have gone from the tomb, straight to the stairs of the Roman governor's palace, and call Pontius Pilate out in front of the masses.
- ✓ And from there I would have paid a well deserved little visit to the priests and the teachers of the law, and rubbed their noses with the bloody cross.
- ✓ Satan would watch me jump from the parapet of the temple, fly through the air, and turn stones into bread.
- ✓ I would have accepted
  - a triumphant reception,
  - a victory parade,
  - a first century press conference.

The third day would have been no ordinary day. It would not have been ordinary at all . . .

And you know what? It is that kind of thinking that brings us full circle, right back to the events leading up to Holy Thursday night, right back to the disease that Our Blessed Lord longed to, and could, heal and liberate others from - more than any other, 2000 years ago, more than any other, today. It is:

- ✓ the disease of pride,
- ✓ the disease of self righteousness,
- ✓ self - justification,
- ✓ self - pursuit,
- ✓ self - reliance.

It could be called the “Judas Syndrome,” that my way is better than God’s way. Judas took matters into his own hands and pushed Our Blessed Lord’s envelope past a divine boundary, and had Him killed. To think that any one of us could rise from the dead better than He did. It is the “Judas Syndrome” at its worst.

The third day played out the exact same way He had played everything that had gone before that first Holy Week,

and His way was so opposite ours: subtle, simple, soft-spoken, gentle, low-key, forgiving and kind . . .

Come to Me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from Me; for I am gentle and humble of heart, and you will find rest for your souls. MT 11:28-29

No one recognized Him on sight.

- ✓ Mary Magdalene thought He was the gardener.
- ✓ Two of his disciples walked miles alongside Him without a clue.

Without even knocking on the door, He appeared to the Apostles.

- ✓ He talked to them,
- ✓ showed them His wounds,
- ✓ He cooked for them on the beach,
- ✓ helped them fish,
- ✓ assured them,
- ✓ counseled them,
- ✓ ate with them,
- ✓ pointed them to the future,
- ✓ and most of all, just like before, He loved them.

And when Our Blessed Lord was confident they understood and certain they could stand on their own feet, He

would leave them, take them up the mountainside where they had probably sat at His feet countless times:

- ✓ these fishermen,
- ✓ tax collectors,
- ✓ ordinary men,

and bid them to take what He gave and taught, and change the world. And that's exactly what they did!

The Resurrection story would not be complete without a summons to what

- ✓ He and His life,
- ✓ His death,
- ✓ and His resurrection

were all about?

The choices of the Son of God are astounding:

To choose to step out of heaven and relinquish every right as deity

- ✓ To choose the posture of an ordinary man;
- ✓ To walk among us and work with us;
- ✓ To taste our sorrows and celebrate our joys;
- ✓ To instruct us, lead us, heal us, reveal His Father's heart to us;

- ✓ And more than anything else, to die and open the gates of heaven to us.

With all the options before Him, why would the Son of God choose these things?

You've heard the answer a hundred times. As many times as I've preached it and as many times as you heard it, it just can be preached or heard enough.

Because He is especially fond of us. He loves us. He's crazy about us.

And because He is so especially fond of us, and loves us and is crazy about us, it begs the question: what things have we chosen to show Him that we are especially fond of Him, how much we love Him, how crazy we are about Him?