

Commentary on the Gospel for Sat, Apr 23rd 2011

EASTER VIGIL - MASS OF EASTER NIGHT

First Reading: Romans 6. 3-11

The Letter to the Romans was not occasioned by any known situation in the church, but was written by Paul as a means of introducing himself before his proposed visit. It is the first text book on systematic theology. The reading expresses the closeness of the bond between Christ and the believer in baptism, death, resurrection and the new life. Four vital Greek words in the passage are compounds involving “with”, an expression of the intimacy of the bond.

Responsorial Psalm: 117. 1-2, 16-17, 22-23

This psalm is the last of the Hallel psalms and was used at the Feast of Tabernacles, a festival celebrating the ingathering of harvest. There is a call for general thanksgiving. In the second stanza a deliverance from peril is brought to mind. The third contains a reference to the rejected stone and this is most apt at Easter. The corner stone was a huge block put in the ground to tie two walls together. The stone symbolises the Jewish nation rejected by the pagan world, but restored by God to a place of honour. In the New Testament Our Lord is seen as the corner stone.

Gospel: Matthew 28. 1-10

The woman who had been faithful to the end came “at the outgoing of the Sabbath” to minister to Jesus’ dead body and for their devotion were rewarded with the first Resurrection appearance, preceded by earthquake, the moved stone, the flight of the guards and the presence of angels. The reading will now present what is the corner stone in our faith, the Lord’s Resurrection. Matthew reports five significant events surrounding the resurrection-events that stir interest and challenges.

1. The time of resurrection: Jesus arose after the Sabbath was over, that is on Sunday, the first day of the week.
2. The first witnesses of the resurrection
 - a. Mary Magdalene
 - b. The other Mary
3. The miraculous events of the resurrection
 - a. The great earthquake
 - b. The great stone rolled back
 - c. The radiant figure: Appearance: Dazzling and Clothing: As snow
 - d. The guards terrified: shook and Affected as dead men
4. The appeals of the resurrection
 - a. Do not fear
 1. Your seeking Messiah is known
 2. He was crucified
 3. He is risen

- b. Come, see: Believe and live
- c. Go quickly and tell: The glorious news
 - 1. He meets you
 - 2. You will see him
 - 3. The woman obeyed: With fear and great joy
- d. Greetings: The glorious encounter with Jesus himself
- 5. The attempt to discredit the resurrection
 - a. The guards reported the resurrection
 - b. The authorities were baffled: devised a plan
 - c. The authorities bribed and assured the soldiers of protection from Pilate
 - d. The lie was found out: The truth marched on

The historical event was a picture of the unbelievable convulsion that God was planning for the end time: the resurrection of all the dead. The resurrection of God's beloved Son paved the way and prefigured the resurrection of all people. The power of God is awesome and terrifying. Believers can become witnesses of the Lord's death and resurrection. They can see as though they were eye witnesses –all by God's Spirit. Truth will always prevail. It may take some time, but its triumphant is assured (Jn 8.32).

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