

Beloved in Christ, today is Easter and always Easter begins with a vigil. Easter Vigil is divided into four parts, namely: The Liturgy of Light. 2. The Liturgy of the Word. 3. The Liturgy of the Baptism and The Liturgy of the Eucharist. The theological significant of the celebration is the symbolism of **light versus darkness**. **The light** represents Jesus Christ in all his glory, virtues and holiness, whereas, **darkness** represents the Devil in all his wackiness, sorrow, death, ignorance and all vices. The Easter Candle tells us that the people who walk in darkness will have Christ as their bright light shining upon them. The Easter proclamation also echoes on the same theme, "This is the night, that with a pillar of fire banished the darkness of sin... set Christian believers apart from worldly vices and from the gloom of sin, leading them to grace... to join the holy ones. On this Easter day, we joyfully celebrate the glorious Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. This miracle is the greatest and the most solemn feast in the Church; for the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ is the greatest of all miracles. This miracle proves that Jesus Christ is truly God. The resurrection is the feast of joy and triumph of **Jesus' victory over sin and death**, and frees us **from the bondage of sin and death**. It is the feast of Jesus transforming us and making us a new creation by giving us the Holy Spirit.

The Resurrection of Jesus Christ is the basis of our Christian faith; in that, all the basic doctrines of Christianity are founded on the truth of Resurrection. Therefore, those who challenge Christianity, who challenge the Resurrection of Lord Jesus Christ and ask the question, *did Jesus really rise from the dead?* The answer is **yes**, because there was an eyewitness account of the key event; take a moment and reflect on these **four pointers** to show that Jesus really rose from the dead: First of all, **the Empty Tomb**: The new tomb in which Jesus was buried was found empty. It was a new tomb; hence, there was no mix up of bodies. There were the Roman guards and even they bore witness to the fact of the empty tomb (Mt.28:3-13). Besides, when the disciples were preaching about the Resurrection of the Lord Jesus, no one brought as counter evidence the body parts or remains of Jesus, or even a tomb with someone else's body'. St. John, who wrote the Gospel, tells us that he also entered into the empty tomb, and **"he saw and he believed."** He believed that the Lord is risen indeed (Jn.20:9).

Secondly, **women were the first witnesses** of the Resurrection. "When Jesus had risen, early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene..." (Mk. 15:9; Jn.20:11-16). Despite their differences in details, all Gospel narratives are agreed upon the fact that **women were the first witnesses of the Resurrection of the Lord Jesus**. *As we know in the Semitic cultures, women's words had no value, as is the case even up to this day in some cultures. So if the disciples were framing a big lie about the Resurrection of Jesus, they would not say and even record that the women were the first witnesses.* The Resurrection event was such an undeniable miracle that it could not be weakened by the words of the women. In today's Gospel, we learn that it was Mary Magdalene, **a woman**, who was the first witness of the Resurrection of the Lord Jesus.

Thirdly, the **Apostles saw him, ate and drank with him** after he had arisen from the dead, and he commissioned them to preach and testify that he is the one appointed by God as a judge of the living and the dead. Again, the scripture tells us that: "Jesus came over and took the bread and gave it to them and in like manner the fish. This was now the third time Jesus was revealed to his disciples after being raised from the dead" (Acts 10:41-42; Jn.21:13-14; Lk.24:36-43). This is an authentic and eyewitness account, which is beyond any reasonable doubt.

Finally, there was a total **transformation of the disciples** who were cowards. Now listen to how they speak before the Sanhedrin: Peter and the apostles said in reply "we must obey God rather than men..." (Acts 5:29). The Resurrection of the Lord Jesus threw a totally different light on the apostles. It led the disciples to a very different understanding of what at first seemed **tragedy, disaster and failure**. The experience of the Resurrection of the Lord Jesus strengthened the faith of the disciples in the Risen Jesus, and completely **transformed** their lives. The disciples, who were at first paralyzed **with fear** of being arrested as accomplices of Jesus, suddenly made a **complete turnaround and began boldly to proclaim** that Jesus, who died on the Cross, was alive and with them. There is no doubt that their experience of the Spirit of the Risen Lord **gave them that unshakable courage that they were ready even to die for this truth that they proclaimed** (cf. Acts 2:14-41). In the Acts of Apostles, we see Peter, now a completely **transformed** man who denied Jesus during his trial and persecution, **boldly, courageously and convincingly giving witness to the mystery of the Resurrection of the Lord**.

In conclusion, dear friends, as the crucifixion is **a historical** event, so the Resurrection is **a faith** event. Again, Easter event highlights not only our faith in the Resurrection, but we are also called to joyfully **proclaim and witness** our faith in the Risen Lord among us. Proclamation and witness are the two central themes running through today's readings: **let us go out and proclaim: "THE LORD IS RISEN INDEED – LET US REJOICE AND BE GLAD! ALLELUIA!**