



The Holy Scriptures
are our letters
from home

Easter Sunday, Yr A,B,C

Lectio Divina

Lectio: Our text can be used in Years A, B or C for Easter Sunday Masses through the day. The Easter Vigil gospel specific for the Year can be used at Masses during the day as an alternative.¹

In John's gospel our text follows the Friday of Jesus' death on the Sunday morning. Jesus truly died on the Cross. The soldiers knew it; that is why they did not break his legs² (Jn 19:33). Also when piercing his side (i.e. his heart) there came out blood then water (Jn 19: 34). There was a witness there who would have been John himself (Jn 19:35). On taking Jesus' body from the Cross they³ buried him in a nearby tomb wrapping him in linen cloths in the Jewish fashion (Jn 19:40-43 concluding Ch. 19). This becomes the context of our gospel text (Jn 20:1-9).

Mary of Magdala truly loved Jesus and so went to the tomb as soon as ritually allowed, i.e. after the Sabbath. She might have come to mourn there because they had to bury Jesus hurriedly without much time to mourn. The stone sealing the tomb had been moved away unsealing the tomb. Her first thought was probably that tomb robbers had stolen the body. She goes straight away to Peter and the other disciple (i.e. John the beloved disciple). Peter and John run to the tomb⁴. They find the linen cloths, which Jesus' body had been wrapped in, on the ground. And the other cloths rolled up in place. That is as if his body had slipped out without disturbing the cloths. This is not what grave robbers would do. Jesus had truly risen. It was John who first believed that Jesus rose from the dead. After this Peter and John went back home (Jn 20:10).

Belief in the resurrection would come to be believed through appearances of the Risen Jesus to Mary Magdala and then to the Apostles. Belief in the Resurrection has been passed on to us through the apostles.

Read: John 20: 1 - 9

Meditatio: Did I take time to mourn for Jesus on Good Friday? Am I sorrowful at the Passion of Jesus – his suffering to death on the Cross? Do I appreciate how much I am loved by Jesus? Do I believe that Jesus died for me – gave up his whole life? How deep is my relationship with Jesus? Have I mourned the loss of a loved one? Do I honour the dead by praying at their tombs in cemeteries? What does Jesus' empty tomb mean for me? Where do I find Jesus? Do I understand how Jesus' body was transformed in the resurrection⁵? Does Jesus' resurrection give me hope in the resurrection of the dead on the last day? Do I celebrate Easter as the Season of New Life – i.e. the new life of the resurrection? Are Easter eggs, chickens, rabbits and Hot Cross Buns truly celebrations of the new life of the resurrection for me? How can I tell others about the true meaning of Easter? Who passed on the faith to me?

Oratio: Pray that Good Friday is always celebrated with due reverence. Pray that mourning the dead will be seen as a holy duty. Pray for a stronger hope in the resurrection of the body⁵ on the last day. Pray that the empty tomb may be seen as a sign of hope and the fulfilment of Jesus' prediction of the resurrection. Pray for respect for the bodies of the dead. Pray that the feelings of loss of a loved one may not overwhelm bereaved relatives. Pray that people will trust that love continues even through death. Pray that the Shroud of Turin may be respected as a holy relic. Pray for belief in the resurrection. Pray that the Resurrection may be understood as part of the will of God for the transformation of the whole world.

Contemplatio – Dwell in stillness, simply aware of the boundless expanse of mercy that surrounds you.

After your prayer – Share the joy of Easter.

Fr Joe

John 20: 1 – 9

It was very early on the first day of the week and still dark, when Mary of Magdala came to the tomb. She saw that the stone had been moved away from the tomb and came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved. ‘They have taken the Lord out of the tomb’ she said ‘and we don’t know where they have put him.’

So Peter set out with the other disciple to go to the tomb. They ran together, but the other disciple, running faster than Peter, reached the tomb first; he bent down and saw the linen cloths on the ground, but did not go in. Simon Peter who was following now came up, went right into the tomb, saw the linen cloths on the ground, and also the cloth that had been over his head; this was not with the linen cloths but rolled up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple who had reached the tomb first also went in; he saw and he believed. Till this moment they had failed to understand the teaching of scripture that he must rise from the dead.

Notes:

1 In Yr B, the Vigil Gospel i.e. Mk 16:1-7 can be used as an alternative for this Easter Sunday Gospel.

2 Criminals crucified could take a long time to die. They would push up with their legs to allow them to breathe and not suffocate. If the legs were broken they would die from suffocation quickly. **Also** in the piercing of Jesus’ side showed blood then water. That is every drop of his blood was poured out for us. And in ancient understanding: blood was the essence of life.

3 The people who prepared Jesus’ body for burial would most likely be some of the women who tended to Jesus’ needs. One of these women was most likely to have been Mary of Magdala. **Also**, this burial occurred hurriedly before the dusk (i.e. the end) of The Day of Preparation. Jesus was crucified at noon and died at about 3pm, so there was not much time left before dusk. The Sabbath begins at the dusk of The Day of Preparation (cf Jn 19:31).

4 John was the younger disciple and thus ran faster than Peter.

5 Consider the last phrases of the Creeds: Apostles’ Creed – “*I believe in ... the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting*” and Nicene Creed – “*I look forward to the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come*”.