



Contributed by Father Ray Reitzel, C.R.

Born in Waterloo and is #9 in a family of 9 boys and 3 girls. One brother (Harry) is a C.R. priest, and two sisters are Notre Dame Sisters. He taught for 31 years at St. Jerome's H.S, Kitchener, and at St. Joseph-Scollard Hall in North Bay. He served in 4 parishes for 17 years. He is now semi-retired and living at Resurrection Manor, Waterloo, a residence for retired CRs.

THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS

April 4, 2021

GATHERING TIME (10-15 Minutes)

Introduction to the Word:

Easter celebrates one of the two **greatest historical events** in the history of humanity: **Christmas** (the birth of Jesus, God made human), and **Easter** (the Resurrection of Jesus from the dead). Easter celebrates the end of the Easter Triduum: Holy Thursday, Good Friday, Easter Sunday—the Passion, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus. Jesus conquers sin and death. Now St. Paul says, in First Corinthians 15:55, “O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?” Only now, do all the teachings of Jesus—His parables, His miracles—and our questions, doubts, suffering, etc. begin to make sense.

His Passion, suffering and death on the cross, where Jesus is the perfect lamb for sacrifice, makes the ultimate sacrifice, to die for the sins of all of humanity. As the Gospel of John says: “For God so loved the world that He gave us His one and only Son, that everyone who believes in Him shall not perish, but may have eternal life....and He will raise them up on the last day” (John 3:16, 6:40).

Just think: the sun is about 10 billion years old, and when it dies out, **in about 10 billion years** from now, we will still be around, rejoicing at the heavenly “feast” with our loving God.

In the *Imitation of Christ*, chap. 47, Thomas à Kempis has Jesus speaking to us, “Ought not all trials be borne for the sake of everlasting life? In truth, **the loss or gain of God’s kingdom is of no small matter.**

“Lift up your countenance to heaven. Behold me with all My Saints. They had great trials in this life, but now they rejoice. They are consoled. Now they are safe and at rest. And they shall abide with me **for all eternity** in the kingdom of My Father.” And in the Gospel **Mary Magdalene** is the first person to witness the resurrection of Jesus, and the first to announce to the Apostles, “**I have seen the Lord!**”

The Easter Season is a prolonged celebration of the Resurrection which we celebrate today. It is fifty days of proclaiming the Risen Christ; fifty days that are seen as one unending day: one feast, one joyful exultation, one Sunday, if you will, which takes fifty days to complete. And every Sunday is considered a “little Easter”.

We begin to form that one great word that seems to explain it all, the one great word spoken softly today, yet a word that grows in volume as we journey deeper into Easter, that one great word that we have thirsted for during Lent – **ALLELUIA!** Hold this word before you as you reflect upon God's word today. Leonard Cohen has made this word awesomely popular in his music rendition (“Hallelujah”) He has 80 verses to this song, and uses meaningful verses for different audiences and occasions: reflecting moments of: depression, baffled, broken, searching, cold, fallen nature … whatever the circumstances are. In the context of hope and love, He bellows out **ALLELUIA!!**

“For those who seek God, all things work together unto good.” Romans 8:28 **ALLELUIA!!**

Warm-up Activity (about 8-10 minutes)

As you reflect back upon your Lenten spiritual exercises, your encounter with prayer, fasting and almsgiving, what are your spiritual expectations for the Season of Easter? Have your Lenten resolutions pointed you in a particular direction? Where do you hope to be spiritually, fifty days from now? How do you intend to live the Resurrection?

The Table of the Word

THEME

My religious community, the Congregation of the Resurrection, has a community prayer that focuses upon the Resurrection, a wonderful prayer to used at any time:

O Risen Lord, the way, the truth and the life, make us faithful followers of the Spirit of Your Resurrection. Grant that we may be inwardly renewed, dying to ourselves in order that you may live in us. May our lives serve as signs of the transforming power of Your love. Use us as your instruments for the renewal of society, bringing your life and love to all, and leading them to your church. This we ask of You, Lord Jesus, living and reigning with the Father, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God forever. Amen.

Leader: Please respond with “**I DO**” to each of the following questions:

Do you reject sin, so as to live in the freedom of God's people? **R**

Do you believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth? **R**

Do you believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son our Lord, who was born of the Virgin Mary, suffered, died and was buried, rose from the dead, and is now seated at the right hand of God the Father? **R**

Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of Saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life-everlasting? **R**

Let us pray (together)

*This is the day, Lord God, that you have made!
Raising Christ from the dead, and raising us with Christ,
you have fashioned for yourself a new people, washed in the waters of baptism,
sealed with the gift of the Spirit, and invited to the banquet of the Lamb.*

*In the beauty of this Easter season,
we offer you all praise and thanks through Jesus,
our Risen Lord and Saviour. Amen.*

SCRIPTURE REFLECTION TIME (45 minutes)

(As Christians we believe that the **WORD** of God we hear proclaimed each Sunday is an empowering Word, and that God is present in the Word proclaimed. This is the Word that God wants us to hear today. The dynamic of the Small Christian Community, namely, reflecting on our life story within the context of this Word, and sharing the insights of these reflections, is such that God's Spirit becomes present, and the gifts of the Spirit are experienced as empowering and life giving.)

FIRST READING (Acts 10:34a, 37-43)

Peter began to speak: "You know the message that spread throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John announced: how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.

"We are witnesses to all that he did both in Judea and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree; but raised him on the third day and allowed him to appear, not to all the people but to us who were chosen by God as witnesses, and who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead.

"He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one ordained by God as judge of the living and the dead. All the Prophets testify about him in that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name."

The Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

SECOND READING (Colossians 3:1-4)

Brothers and sisters: If you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth, for you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life is revealed, then you also will be revealed with him in glory.

The Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL (John 20:1-18)

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him."

Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in.

Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, and the cloth that had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; for as yet they did not understand the Scripture, that he must rise from the dead.

Then the disciples returned to their homes. But Mary Magdalene stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. They said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him."

When she said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?"

Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away." Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned and said to him in

Hebrew, “Rabbuni!” which means Teacher. Jesus said to her, “Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to my Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, “I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.”

Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, “I have seen the Lord!” and she told them that he had said these things to her.

The Gospel of the Lord. Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Lectio Divina means “sacred prayer through sacred reading.” It was a popular form of prayer in the early Church. This Word proclaimed today is God's own Word, God's way of speaking to you today through God's own Spirit. So take a few moments to be quiet, allowing this Word you have just heard to touch you or soak into you as you reflect quietly on the three readings. Is there a word or thought that somehow attracts you or has your interest? If so, simply identify it and describe it in a few words.

COMMENTARY:

Acts of the Apostles: Saint Peter, seemingly speaking to those (Gentiles) who already knew the story of Jesus, summarizes very briefly the time of Jesus from the beginning of His public ministry, to His Resurrection and Ascension. Peter reminds us that the public ministry of Jesus began in Galilee following His baptism by John the Baptist. The public ministry of Jesus, carried out “with the Holy Spirit and with power” to heal the sick, and proclaiming the Good News. The Prophets testify to the things that Jesus did. Peter and many other disciples gave witness to all that Jesus did during His public ministry, and also what followed the period of public ministry, namely, Jesus being put to death. However, Peter reminds us that after His death “on a tree,” **Jesus rose from the dead and appeared to many He had chosen.** When Jesus appeared to His Apostles, He commanded them to continue the ministry which He began, by preaching and testifying to the truth.

Colossians

The Colossians were living in a ‘worldly’ environment where they were being constantly bombarded with all kinds of seductive theories, philosophies and religious doctrines that had the potential of leading the people away from the true path. Paul reminds them, “If you have been raised with Christ, **seek the things that are above**, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God”. Again, he reminds them, “Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.”

This reminds me of our dear old **Brother Marion** in high school. Whenever he passed someone, he would raise his index finger to Heaven and greet them with the word “UP!” In other words, keep your mind focused on Heaven, on spiritual things, not on worldly things.

Gospel of John: This scriptural account of the Resurrection is very familiar to us. Early on the first day of the week, Sunday, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene and two other women (Mark 16:1) came to the tomb to anoint the body of Jesus. They were astonished that the large stone had already been removed from the opening of the tomb. They ran to Simon Peter and John declaring, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.” Peter and John ran to the tomb. Peter noticed the folded linen wrappings inside the tomb, and when John went in, and **he saw and believed**; for as yet they did not understand the Scripture, that Jesus must rise from the dead.

Then the disciples returned to their homes. But **Mary Magdalene** stood outside the tomb, weeping. She ‘sees’ Jesus, thinking he is the gardener. Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?” Supposing him to be the gardener she said to him, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him.”

Jesus said to her, “Mary!” She turned and **recognizing** Jesus, said to him in Hebrew, “Rabbouni!” which means Teacher. Jesus said to her, “Do not hold unto me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father.

But go to my brothers and say to them, “I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.” Mary Magdalene went and announced to the Apostles, “I have seen the Lord,” and she told them that he had said these things to her.

You will notice at other appearances of the risen Jesus to follow, the disciples, at first, **do not “recognize”** the Risen Christ. This is so true in our faith development, it takes a while, through the grace of God, to finally recognize this Jesus as our personal Savior. In the process we may learn a lot ‘**about**’ Jesus, as we strive to reach the point of ‘**knowing**’ Jesus. Also, we go through a gradual process when we try to **recognize “Jesus” in each person** we meet.

We may be surprised when Jesus told Mary, “**Do not touch me!**” this may be due to the translation from Aramaic, to Greek or Latin, to English. It would be more like, “Mary, do not **hold unto me so tightly, or, for so long!** I will be around for a while. I have not yet ascended to my Father.” “You cannot keep Me for yourself. **I come to all**, so they can “**hold me**” in their hearts and remain with Me.”

Allow 5 – 10 minutes for the participants to react to the **Commentary**, to identify a newly discovered insight.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION:

Acts 10:34a, 37-43

“We are witnesses”

Peter reminds us that he was present during the public ministry and death of Jesus, bearing witness to all that Jesus had said and done. However, in this scripture passage Peter does not offer any concrete examples of what Jesus had said and done. If you were to bear witness to all that Jesus said and did in his public ministry what examples would you cite? Why?

Colossians 3:1-4

“You also will be revealed with him in glory”

Paul promises us that if we “seek the things that are above,” we will be “at peace and rejoice with him in glory”. What exactly are the things from above we are called to seek? What does it mean that we will share in the revelation of Christ's glory? Discuss.

John 20:1-18

“Woman, why are you weeping?”

Without question Mary Magdalene reveals the depth of her love for Jesus in the tears she weeps. She was experiencing the emptiness and pain that comes when someone we love dies, a very natural and necessary process of grief that can lead to healing and acceptance. The tears she wept were quickly dried when she recognized Jesus, risen from the dead. Try and imagine the emotions that Mary must have been experiencing after she recognized Jesus. What was she feeling? What questions do you think she had?

CARING-PRAYING TIME: (15-20 minutes)

1. Word of the Week: “And John saw and believed”

2. Suggestion for the Week:

This is actually a suggestion for the weeks of Easter, the fifty days we dedicate to celebrating and announcing the Lord's Resurrection. Each day when you awake, begin your day with the words **“This is the day the Lord has made! Let us rejoice and be glad!”** Recall these words throughout your day and allow that message to touch all the events of your day. My promise to you is that this action will truly transform your life, lead you to a fuller realization that the Lord is part of all that we do and say throughout our day.

3. Intercessions: (Response: **Lord, hear our prayer**)

Leader: As believers who are one in heart and soul, let us pray through Jesus, the Son of God gloriously risen from the dead.

That we **the church** may give testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. by our love of God, and our generous care for those in need, we pray to the Lord ...

That **world leaders** may find the means to conquer mistrust, and work towards a world of peace and justice, we pray to the Lord ...

That the **neophytes**, born of God in the sacraments of initiation, may always find joy in their new life in Jesus the Messiah, we pray to the Lord ...

That we **who have not seen the risen Lord**, and yet have come to believe, may be blessed in sharing the peace and forgiveness we have received, we pray to the Lord ...

That the full **message of the resurrection** be rooted deeply in our hearts, and **radiate out for all** the world to see, we pray to the Lord ...

That the gift of the resurrection be the reward for all those **who have died** in the faith of the Risen Lord, we pray to the Lord ...

How can we help you in prayer this week?

Let us pray (together)

*Lord God, we have heard Your Word that brings salvation,
causing our hearts to burn with great joy and exultation.*

*Open our eyes and our ears, to recognize the One whose feast we celebrate today,
the resurrection of your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ,
who lives and reigns with you, for ever and ever. Amen.*

**With hands and hearts united in gratitude for God's favours today, we pray that all those in our influence be moved to be open to your Word and your Spirit, while we pray as one,
OUR FATHER ...**

Celebrating the Word, Resurrection Ministries of the Congregation of the Resurrection Ontario-Kentucky Province (including the former Resurrection Centre), 265 Westmount Road North, Waterloo, Ontario, Canada N2L 3G7. (Celebrating the Word was founded by Father Frank Ruetz, C.R. deceased 2012. The Scripture version used in this commentary is the New Revised Standard Version (copyrighted by the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA).

For information: website: www.resurrectionists.ca. Email: provincialoffice@resurrectioncollege.ca