



From the Pastor's Desk:

"Reflection on Hope and New Life After the Easter Feasts"

By Thomas Rosica, CSB (Consulter to the Pontifical Council for Social Communications) - ...continued... **PART 2**

The Resurrection Witnesses in the Fourth Gospel

John's Resurrection story (chapters 20-21) is a series of encounters between Jesus and his followers that reveal diverse faith reactions. Whether these encounters are with Simon Peter and the Beloved Disciple, Mary Magdalene, the disciples or Thomas, the whole scenario reminds us that in the range of belief there are different degrees of readiness and different factors that cause people to come to faith and help them in turn to become witnesses and teachers.

A morning race to the Tomb (Jn 20:3-5)

Given John's penchant for symbolism, many people have tried to decipher the possible symbolic message encoded in the race of Peter and the Beloved Disciple to the tomb. Is it simply a question of the Beloved Disciple being younger and more agile than Peter? Or could it be that these two apostolic figures represent two "currents" within the early Church, and perhaps a tension within the Johannine community — Peter representing the more staid, traditional, authority-minded model, and the Beloved Disciple representing the more charismatic, Spirit-filled, enthusiastic, less institutional model which may have predominated in John's community?

Was the Beloved Disciple considered the origin of a movement that claimed deeper spiritual insights into Jesus' identity, which were perhaps sidelined in the beginning by the more "mainstream" communities? Perhaps the arrival of the Beloved Disciple first signifies the emotional rush of those guided by their hearts and their personal experience of Jesus, but the fact that he waits outside and allows Peter to enter first suggests a certain deference for the Church's duly-appointed leadership?

Closer to Jesus both in life (13:23) and in death (19:26-27), the Beloved Disciple sees the significance of the garments left behind in the empty tomb when Peter does not (20:8-10). The disciple who was bound closest in love to Jesus was the fastest to look for him, and the first to believe in him. But what did he believe? John does not tell us. He simply believed, and without another word exchanged he and Peter returned to their homes.

The rest of the story belongs to Mary. She is the one who saw the angels. Peter and the beloved disciple saw none of this. They saw nothing but a vacant tomb with two piles of clothes in it. They saw nothing but emptiness and absence, in other words, and on that basis at least one of them believed, although neither of them understood.

Mary Magdalene

Mary Magdalene, Mary of Bethany (sister of Martha and Lazarus), and the unnamed penitent woman who anointed Jesus' feet (Lk 7:36-18) are sometimes understood to be the same woman. From this, plus the statement that Jesus had cast seven demons out of Mary Magdalene (Lk 8:2), has risen the tradition that Mary Magdalene had been a prostitute before she met Jesus. But in reality we know nothing about her sins or weaknesses. They could have been inexplicable physical disease, mental illness, or anything that prevented her from wholeness in mind and body. Mary Magdalene is mentioned in the Gospels as being among the women of Galilee who followed Jesus and his disciples, ministered in him, and who, according to each of the Evangelists, was present at his crucifixion and burial, and went to the tomb on Easter Sunday to anoint his body.

Jesus lived in an androcentric society. Women were property, first of their fathers, then of their husbands; they did not have the right to testify; they could not study the Torah. In this restricting atmosphere, Jesus acted without animosity, accepting women, honoring them, respecting them, and treasuring their friendship. He journeyed with them, touched and cured them, loved them and allowed them to love him.

In our Easter Gospels, we peered once again into the early morning scene of sadness as Mary Magdalene weeps uncontrollably at the grave of her friend, Jesus. We hear anew their conversation: "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?" "...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, "Rabboni!" (which means, Teacher).... "Stop clinging to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to my brethren and say to them, ascend to my Father and your Father, and my God and your God". Mary Magdalene came, announcing to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord", and that he had said these things to her (Jn 20:15-18).

Because of her incredible message and mission, Mary Magdalene was fittingly called "*Apostola Apostolorum*" (Apostle to the Apostles) in the early Church because she was the first to see the Risen Lord, and to announce his Resurrection to the other Apostles.

(...To be continued next week.)

May God +bless you and yours now and forever,

Father Anthony

April

IS CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION MONTH

Keeping
OUR PROMISE TO Protect

PRAY FOR OUR CHILDREN

Protection Prayer

*Jesus, who invites the children to come to him,
protect our children
strengthen them in time of danger,
heal them in time of sorrow
give them laughter and delight,
restore their innocence
for such is the kingdom of heaven.*

*Jesus, who is the Good Shepherd
enable parents to love their children well
inspire all caregivers to protect those in their charge
endow the clergy with great wisdom in their ministry
as the Shepherd who lays down his life for his sheep.*

*Jesus, who is Light of the World,
endow teachers with inner sight
grant doctors skill in healing
imbue therapists with compassion
that they walk not in darkness, but have the light of life.*

This prayer comes from our Diocesan Office for Child Protection – Please pray this prayer “In Solidarity with our Bishop”

I ask all parishioners to offer this prayer each day.

May God +bless you and yours now and forever.

Father Anthony