

The Resurrection of Our Lord
St. Mark 16:1-8

In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

The women went to the tomb, supposing to spice the body of Jesus since they had little time to do it before the Sabbath. They wondered about the stone. They likely worried about the Roman guard. They were surprised to see the stone rolled away and the tomb empty, like it had been before Jesus was laid to rest there; it was, after all, a new tomb—no one else had been buried there yet. However, the tomb was not totally empty; a young man was sitting inside, waiting just for them. He proclaimed,

Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He is risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid Him. But go, tell His disciples—and Peter—that He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him, as He said to you.

An angel proclaimed the incarnation of the Son of God, and now an angel proclaims His victory over death for the women and for all men!

What good news. “He is risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid Him.” The stone is rolled away, granting the women access to the empty tomb. Where once there was death, now they see the absence of death and hear the proclamation of life from an angel of God. Luke reports that the angels even told the women, “Why do you seek the living among the dead?” (Luke 24:5) Jesus is alive, which means that He who once was dead has conquered death. He is risen! Hallelujah!

It’s the great good news of what is good and right having conquered what is evil and wrong. It’s the plot-line everyone loves in the movies—that of the good guys triumphing over the bad guys. In the end, the bad guys always get what is coming to them, and good always triumphs over evil. For two hours, though, you see evil getting its way, winning battles, claiming small victories, and for all accounts, looking like it will win the day, but in the decisive battle, good ultimately wins the day.

And for you, the plot-line holds. For most of your two-hour lifetime, it appears that evil wins the small victories. You are born into a fallen world and immediately begin to suffer the effects of it. Disease and constant struggles mark your life in this world. You are beaten and bruised by the cares and concerns of life. And at every turn, temporal life throws you a curve ball and wins a little victory. Evil has it’s way for a while, but in the end, good will triumph, and it is a promise sealed to you in the words of the angel: “He is risen! He is not here. Why do you seek the living among the dead?”

Yes, dear baptized, one day, death will even have its way with you. You will find yourselves in your graves, loved ones mourning over you as you have mourned over your own loved ones. For all appearances, it will look as if death had won. Such was the same with Jesus. At Golgotha, Jesus was crucified, and in the span of a few hours, gave up His life to death. For all appearances, it looked as if evil had triumphed over God: Jesus had died. But on the cross, Jesus spilled His blood as your propitiation—He shed His blood for the remission of your sins—He died so that you would live. This, only to be laid in a new grave, from which He would rise. It appeared as if death had won—God was dead, and nothing seemed to have changed—but Jesus is risen. “Why do you seek the living among the dead?”

Because He lives, you, too, shall live. Your death is only temporary; you are baptized into Jesus’ death AND resurrection; therefore, though you die, you shall live. So, go to the gravesides of your deceased relatives—also baptized into Christ—but, and this is true of you as well, “Why do you seek the living among the dead?” On the last day, you and they shall rise from their graves to life everlasting. Because Jesus lives, you, too, shall live!

Jesus died as your propitiation, giving His blood for your remission. As I said, you were born into a fallen world where time and again, it looks as if evil triumphs over good as it has its way with you

and all those around you. And to further compound this view, you participate in that evil. It's so bad, that you were born enemies of God, and in fact, you still struggle against God, though claimed by Him as His saint in Christ. Not only do trials, temptations, and setback happen to you—struggles in home, school, and at the job, deterioration and loss of property, injury and disease—you also have a part in it all, sinning against family, friends, and God. God gives a list of things you are to do, and you prefer to do something different. You are sinful, and so you sin, and the wages of sin is death, so one day, dear hearer, you will die. (cf. Romans 6:23)

If you want to know what that sin looks like, then look at Peter. As Jesus predicted His death, He tells His disciples that they will all stumble because of Him. Peter boldly replied, "Even if all are made to stumble, yet I will not be." (Mark 14:29) Jesus told them that their stumbling would fulfill the Scripture: "I will strike the Shepherd, And the sheep will be scattered." (cf. Zechariah 13:7b; Mark 14:27b) Jesus tells Peter, "Assuredly, I say to you that today, even this night, before the rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times." (Mark 14:30) Three times, Peter does just that.

It was a good thing that Peter said. He was confident in being able to stand with Jesus. Perhaps he even thought that he would have to die with Jesus and preferred that over any alternative. "Jesus, if they come to arrest you to kill you, they'll have to get through me, and I'll even go to the gallows with you." Peter demonstrated as much in the garden when they guards came to arrest Jesus, taking up arms to protect his teacher, even cutting off the ear of poor Malchus. (cf. John 18:10)

It was also a bad thing that Peter said. For one thing, it was boastful. "Even if **all these others** will stumble, I won't. I'm better than that. I'm better than them." What hubris, to think of oneself as greater than another, especially when Jesus had just said that not one of them is greater than another. For another thing, Peter's boast went against the Word of God, first as it was predicted in Zechariah, and second as it came from the mouth of Jesus Himself. "No, Jesus, you and the prophet are wrong; I won't stumble."

Sure enough, just as Jesus said, Peter finds himself in the courtyard, pointed out as a Galilean and follower of Jesus three times, and three times He denies knowing the Man. The rooster crows, Jesus turns and looks at Peter, and Peter runs off weeping bitterly.

The morning of the third day, the women arrive at the tomb to spice Jesus' body. The stone is rolled away. An angel proclaims to them that Jesus is risen. He tells them to tell the disciples—and Peter—that He is going before them into Galilee, just as He said...just as He said. Jesus told the disciples that He would do this right after telling them that they would stumble: "But after I have been raised, I will go before you to Galilee." (Mark 14:28) The angel knew Peter needed to be reminded of this. Peter needed to be singled out.

Now, you might hear this in a couple of ways. Perhaps you see yourself in Peter's sandals both ways.

- First, you might see Peter as the obstinate disciple and one needing constant reminders. He's always the one speaking before thinking. He's brash and hardly mindful of the consequences of his words and actions. Jesus' words from the angel are then a pointed reminder to Peter that when Jesus says something, He means it. Just as all would stumble, whether he thought he wouldn't or not, just as he would deny Jesus three times before the rooster crows, and these things did happen, so He will rise and go before them into Galilee. "Don't you remember, Peter? He's now risen! Can you guess what He's doing now? Don't worry about guessing, I'll tell you again: He's going into Galilee before you!" Yeah, you need to be reminded over and over again of what Jesus had said.
- Second, you might see Peter as the disciple that needed the extra comfort. Yes, Jesus told all the disciples that they would stumble that night, and they all did. Only Peter decided that he would not, yet even he still did. The crow of a rooster and a look from Jesus, and Peter was brought low, reminded of the Word of God, and killed by the law of God. So, Peter is singled

out in the angel's proclamation so that he would know that Jesus is going before *even Him* into Galilee, just as He said. The great, good news of Jesus risen is for them all, even for Peter. Even at his worst, Peter is still beloved of Jesus. In the same way, even in your worst, you are still beloved of Jesus.

Dear baptized, you are like Peter. The Word of God tells you your sin, even proclaims that you will transgress the law of God. It declares to you that all of your righteous deeds are nothing but filthy rags. (cf. Isaiah 64:6) Sometimes, you agree with that—or at least, you don't openly argue with it; Jesus tells you that you will stumble, and like the 11, you don't open your mouth. Sometimes, you can't help but argue, that is, you know of one time when you did something that surely ought to garner the favor of God; like Peter, you open your mouth and insert your foot. You stumble, whether you think you will or not, and you are singled out, just like Peter.

God calls you by name through His messenger, and like Peter, you are restored and forgiven personally. At the font, your name was called out as you were made a son of God. There, in those waters, you were given the Holy Spirit and forgiven for all of your sins. In Holy Absolution, at private Confession, the messenger of God calls you by name and declares into your ears and your ears alone that Jesus died and rose for you. There, he points you to your baptism where you were named and claimed as God's dear son.

This means that you can take Jesus' death and resurrection personally, dear baptized. For you, insert name, Jesus was conceived and born. For you, insert name, Jesus lived and died and was buried. For you, insert name, Jesus rose again from the dead. Hallelujah! Christ is risen for you, insert name! He is risen indeed.

And just like He was going before the disciples—and Peter—into Galilee, so now He has gone before you to His Father's house.

Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me.
In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also. And where I go you know, and the way you know. I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me. (John 14:1-4, 6)

"I go to prepare a place for you, insert name." Yes, Jesus said this to the disciples, and it is to be declared to you. This is for you, because you are baptized into His death and resurrection. Hallelujah, Jesus lives! And because He lives, you, too, shall live! He is the way, the truth, and the life—all of it by way of His death and resurrection. These are yours, dear Peter, and all of you Peters in the congregation—way, truth, life, death, resurrection, life everlasting—gifts to you by way of the Son who died and rose for you and is now preparing a place for you in the Father's house. Therefore, insert your name here: you are forgiven for all of your sins!

Hallelujah! Christ is risen! [He is risen indeed! Hallelujah!]

In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.