

EASTER SUNDAY OF THE RESURRECTION OF THE LORD
APRIL 20/21, 2019

Last November I visited the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. Within the church is the chapel containing the tomb of Jesus. As I entered the tomb, knelt, and placed my hands in prayer over the spot where Jesus' body laid, these words from St. Luke's Gospel echoed in my mind, "*Why do you seek the living one among the dead? He is not here; he has been raised*" (Lk. 24:5-6).

The empty tomb, while the most sacred relic of the person of Jesus and his saving death and resurrection, in the end is just that—an empty tomb. In and of itself it neither proves nor disproves that the one buried in it has risen and is alive. The mystery of Jesus' resurrection which lives at the heart of our Christian faith, is not a truth that can be "proved" by philosophy, theology, science, or technology. While all of these disciplines, or others, may add to, or detract from, belief in Jesus' resurrection, in the end, it is **faith**--a personally chosen decision to open one's life to the person and message of Jesus, not as an idea, or intellectual concept, but a present living person, existing eternally in a transfigured glorified human body no longer subject to the limits of physical time, that is the truth upon which Jesus' resurrection rests. When it comes to Jesus' resurrection you either believe or not! There is no middle ground.

In St. John's Gospel account of the events of Easter morning is the witness of the disciple known as the "beloved" who peering into the empty tomb is described as "*having seen and believed*" (Jn.20:8). More than physical sight, the beloved disciple "saw" with the eyes of faith, an open life, heart and soul to the person and divine claim of Jesus and in that act of faith experienced the mystery of Christ's indwelling presence in his life.

For any person who chooses to "*see and believe*" (Jn. 20:8) like the beloved disciple with the eyes of faith, the empty tomb proclaims the truth that, along with beloved disciple, and all who have also chosen to "*see and believe*" down through the centuries of Christian faith and practice, the believer, carries within themselves the life of Jesus indwelling in them through the Holy Spirit Jesus promised to send when he was "*lifted up from the earth*" (Jn. 12:32). The sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation initiate and seal us the resurrected life of Jesus. Our

weekly assembling in celebration of Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist, as Jesus himself commanded us, nourishes, sustains and deepens this life. But the believer's "being in Christ" does not end here. Enlivened by Jesus, like the holy women and the beloved disciples of that first Easter morning, we, like them, are sent from the empty tomb to ***"Go forth and teach all nations"*** (Mt. 28:19), to live the mystery of "Christ with-and-within us" in and for the world.

St. Oscar Romero, the martyr archbishop of San Salvador understood this mystery of "being in Christ" and the mission flowing from the empty tomb. ***"As a Christian, I do not believe in death without Resurrection,"*** he stated shortly before he was martyred while celebrating Mass. Sometime before his death Archbishop Romero also gave voice to the mission commissioned to every person at our baptism. ***"Each one of you has to be God's microphone. Each of you has to be a messenger, a prophet. The church will always exist as long as there is someone who has been baptized...Where is your baptism? You are baptized in your professions, in the fields of workers, in the market. Wherever there is someone who has been baptized, that is where the church is. There is a prophet there. Let us not hide the talent God gave us on the day of our baptism and let us truly live the beauty and responsibility of being a prophetic people."***

"Why do you seek the living one among the dead? He is not here. He has been raised. ... They returned from the tomb and announced all these things" (Lk. 24:5,6, 9). ***"I arose and am still with you"*** (Ps. 138:18) Jesus proclaims again today.

IT'S TIME TO LEAVE THE TOMB!

*21 April, 2019
Father Jim Secora*