



EASTER 2021

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Early on Easter morning, three women go to the tomb of Jesus to anoint His body, per Jewish custom. Approaching the tomb, they discuss the dilemma of rolling back the large stone that covers the entrance, for it is too heavy for them to move. It is at this moment that they realize the stone has been rolled away and, upon entering the tomb, Jesus' body is nowhere to be found. Rather, an angel greets them with the instruction, "Do not be amazed!" Jesus had risen just as He had foretold. (Mark 16:1-7)

How often during this past year have we discussed with one another our human frailty amid the heavy burdens that confront us? Like the three women, we continue with our daily responsibilities amid uncertainty, doubt, and confusion. If this past year has taught us anything, a lesson may be that we have less control over our lives and the successes we seek than we once thought. Rather than depress or frustrate us, this realization should be a consolation to all those who celebrate the Resurrection.

It was precisely in this moment of the recognition of weakness that the glory of God was made manifest. While the women entered the empty tomb in sheer amazement, the heavenly being reminded them, "Do not be amazed!" What is burdensome, overwhelming, destructive, and even deadly for humans, is conquered by Christ. God has promised to save us, and Christ has surely risen from the dead. Do not be amazed!

What the angel is instructing the women – and all of us now – is to believe that God is faithful. Every worry of the human heart comes from a lack of trust in God's faithfulness. During Lent, we may have profoundly experienced these worries as we tried to let go of the behaviors or treasures we cling to for security and comfort. At Easter, we rejoice in the event of God's faithfulness that destroys the fears, even the ultimate fear of death, forever. Rather than be amazed, or in disbelief of the saving power of God, we are called to rejoice in His faithfulness and love for us.

I invite you to ponder the reading from Isaiah 54 that was read at the Easter Vigil. We hear the Lord say:

Though the mountains leave their place and the hills be shaken, my love shall never leave you nor my covenant of peace be shaken, says the LORD, who has mercy on you...

All your children shall be taught by the LORD, and great shall be the peace of your children. In justice shall you be established, far from the fear of oppression, where destruction cannot come near you. (Is 54:10-14)

In the many ways we have all been challenged, confounded, or wounded this past year, I ask you to bring these burdens to the empty tomb. Together with the women, encounter the glory of God's faithfulness and let your heart rejoice in His mercy and love for you. His love will never leave you. Let us all bring the joy of the Resurrection, which we celebrate at every Mass, to our families and communities.

With a heart full of gratitude for your faithfulness, I am,
Sincerely yours in Christ,

+ Jerome E. Listecki

Archbishop Jerome E. Listecki