



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

REGINA CAELI

Saint Peter's Square
Easter Monday, 10 April 2023

[Multimedia]

Dear brothers and sisters, *buongiorno!*

Today the Gospel lets us relive the women's encounter with the Risen Jesus on Easter morning. It thus reminds us that it was them, the women disciples, who were the first to see him and encounter him.

We might ask ourselves: why them? For a very simple reason: because they were the first to go to the tomb. Like all the disciples, they too were suffering because of the way the story of Jesus seemed to have ended. However, unlike the others, they do not stay at home paralyzed by sadness and fear: in the early morning, at sunrise, they go to honour Jesus' body, bringing aromatic ointments. The tomb had been sealed and they wonder who could have removed that stone, so heavy (cf. *Mk* 16:1-3). But their wish to carry out this gesture of love prevails over all else. They are not discouraged; they overcome their fears and their anguish. This is the way to find the Risen One: to emerge from our fears, to come out from our anguish.

Let us retrace the scene described in the Gospel: the women arrive, they see the empty tomb and, "with fear and great joy", they run, the text says, to "tell his disciples" (*Mt* 28:8). Now, just as they are going to give this news, Jesus comes towards them. Let us take good note of this: Jesus meets them while they are going to proclaim him. This is beautiful: Jesus meets them while they are going to proclaim him. When we proclaim the Lord, the Lord comes to us. Sometimes we think that the way to be close to God is to keep him tightly close to us; because then, if we reveal

ourselves and start to talk about him, judgements, criticisms arise, and we may not know how to respond to certain questions or provocations. So it is better not to talk about him, and to close up: no, this is no good. Instead, the Lord comes while we proclaim him. You always find the Lord on the path of proclamation. Proclaim the Lord and you will encounter him. Seek the Lord and you will encounter him. Always on a journey, this is what the women teach us: we encounter Jesus by witnessing him. Let us put this in our hearts: we encounter Jesus by witnessing him.

Let us give an example. At times we may have received some wonderful news, for instance, the birth of a child. And one of the first things we do [on these occasions] is to share this happy announcement with friends: “You know, I have had a baby... He is beautiful”. And, by talking about it, we also repeat it to ourselves and somehow make it come even more alive within us. If this happens for good news, related to everyday events or important ones, it happens infinitely more for Jesus, who is not only good news, nor even the best news of life, no! Rather, he is life itself, he is “the resurrection and the life” (*Jn 11:25*). Every time we proclaim him, not by propaganda or proselytizing — that, no: proclaiming is one thing, propaganda and proselytism are another matter. Christians proclaim; those who have other agendas proselytize, and this is no good — every time we proclaim him, the Lord comes towards us. He comes with respect and love, as the most beautiful gift to share. Jesus dwells in us every time we proclaim him.

Let us think again of the women of the Gospel: there was the sealed stone and despite this, they go to the tomb; there was an entire city that had seen Jesus on the cross and nevertheless they go to the city to announce that he is alive. Dear brothers and sisters, when one encounters Jesus, no obstacle can prevent us from proclaiming him. If instead we keep his joy for ourselves, perhaps it is because we have not yet truly encountered him.

Brothers, sisters, faced with the women’s experience we ask ourselves: tell me, when was the last time you bore witness to Jesus? When was the last time I bore witness to Jesus? What do I do today to make the people I meet receive the joy of his proclamation? And again: can someone say: this person is serene, happy, good, because he or she has met Jesus? Can this be said of every one of us? Let us ask Our Lady to help us be joyful proclaimers of the Gospel.

After praying the Regina Caeli, the Holy Father continued:

Dear brothers and sisters, today is the 25th anniversary of the so-called Belfast, or Good Friday Agreement, which put an end to the violence that had troubled Northern Ireland for decades. With a spirit of gratitude, I pray to the God of peace that what was accomplished in that historic step may be consolidated for the benefit of all men and women of the Isle of Ireland.

I renew my wishes for a happy Easter to all of you, people of Rome and pilgrims from various

countries: “Christ is risen; he is truly risen”. I greet you warmly, especially the teenagers of the parishes of Vigevano, the young people from Pisa and those from Appiano Gentile.

I thank all of you who sent your good wishes to me in these days. I am especially grateful for your prayers: through the intercession of the Virgin Mary, may God reward each one with his gifts!

And I hope everyone will spend these days of the Octave of Easter, in which the celebration of Christ’s Resurrection is extended, in the joy of faith. Let us persevere in invoking the gift of peace for the whole world, especially for dear and martyred Ukraine.

Happy Monday of the Angel! Please do not forget to pray for me. Enjoy your lunch. *Arrivederci!*