

EASTER SUNDAY- RESURRECTION OF THE LORD– 16th APRIL 2017

HE IS RISEN.....(AND) IS GOING BEFORE YOU TO GALILEE - Biblical commentary by Father Alberto Maggi OSM

Matthew 28,1-10

Now after the Sabbath, toward the dawn of the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. And behold, there was a great earthquake, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. And for fear of him the guards trembled and became like dead men. But the angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here, for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead, and behold, he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him. See, I have told you." So they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. And behold, Jesus met them and said, "Greetings!" And they came up and took hold of his feet and worshiped him. Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see me."

No evangelist describes the resurrection of Jesus. The traditional classical known image of the triumphant Christ rising from the grave, does not in fact belong to the gospels, but to an apocryphal of the 2nd century, called the Gospel of Peter. But all the evangelists give instructions on how to encounter the living Christ. The experience of the risen Christ, in fact, was not a privilege granted two thousand years ago to a small group of people, but a chance for believers of all times. Let's see what Matthew tells us in chapter 28, of the resurrection.

"Now after the Sabbath," here the evangelist begins with a point: the law of the observance of the Sabbath has delayed the early community of the experience of the risen Christ. *" Now after the Sabbath, toward the dawn of the first day of the week.. "* The first day recalls the day of the creation. The first day of the week, is the eighth day, and the number 8 in the early church will have the significance of the Risen Christ, and it is also the number of the beatitudes.

" Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb" one woman is missing; at the crucifixion of Jesus there were three women present; Mary Magdalene and the other Mary, the mother of James and Joseph, but there was also the mother of the sons of Zebedee. She's not there anymore, why? This ambitious woman, who wanted glory and success for her children, when she sees that the Messiah finally dies, she lost all hope, so will not be a witness to the resurrection.

"And behold, there was a great earthquake," In the bible an earthquake was a sign of the manifestation divine, *"..an angel of the Lord descended from heaven.. "* the angel was not one sent by God, but God himself when he entered in contact with humanity. This appears three times in this gospel; to pronounce the life of Jesus, to protect him from the murderous intentions of Herod, and to confirm now that, when life comes from God, it is indestructible.

"..an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone and sat on it." Sitting was a sign of conquest. Different from the women in the previous chapter, the evangelist had indicated that they were sitting in front of the tomb in a sign of mourning, the angel sitting of the stone in a sign of victory. *"His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow."* It is the same description at the transfiguration of Jesus and the colours of divine glory.

"And for fear of him the guards trembled and became like dead men." there is the eruption of the fullness of life, but how many belong to the world of death, for them it is not an experience of life, but a sinking more deeply into death.

"But the angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid," this is strange, because the guards were the ones to be afraid, the angel ignores them and turns to the women, saying "Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here..." The angel does not say is no longer here, (but) he is not here: the tomb has never been able to hold him, he who was the living Christ, *".. for he has risen,"* and here is a veiled rebuke, *"...as he said."* He had said it a good three times *"Come, see the place where he lay."* and *"Then go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead, and behold, he is going before you to Galilee;"* Galilee is important in the resurrection narrative, it will appear three times *"..there you will see him."* To "see" is the same expression as in the beatitudes *"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."* (Matthew 5, 8) it does not mean seeing physically, but a profound interior experience. The risen Christ in this gospel, Matthew's gospel, never manifests himself at Jerusalem, the murderous city, the city that from the start, is under a pall of darkness, but to see Jesus, to experience him, one must go to Galilee, the place of his preaching.

"So they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy,..." they left quickly, the tomb that had never been able to hold the living Christ, and with great joy. Women, who were considered the most distant from God, in reality are the nearest, they have the same function as the angels *"..they ran to tell his disciples. And behold, Jesus met them.."* When you go to communicate and proclaim life, there is always the Lord who comes to meet you, to strengthen, by his presence, the announcement, *"....and said, Greetings!"* Here the translation is actually "rejoice", why? At the end of the Beatitudes, the last beatitude, that of the persecuted, Jesus had said: rejoice because great is your reward in heaven. Here is your reward: an indestructible life, a life able to overcome death.

"And they came up and took hold of his feet and worshiped him." Touching his feet indicates a real physical meeting, not a spiritual one with a ghost. In worshiping him they recognise the fullness of the divine condition. *"Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers.."* for the first time the disciples are called Jesus' brothers. *"...to go to Galilee,"* and again the invitation *"..and there they will see me."* Why is it possible to see Jesus in Galilee? We shall see that the disciples will go Galilee on "the mountain where Jesus had told them." (Matthew 28, 16) But Jesus did not indicate any mountain. What is this mountain? It is the Mount of the Beatitudes. What then is the message of the evangelist? By living, accepting the Beatitudes, expressing fully the good news of Jesus, there is the opportunity to experience and encounter in their own lives, the one who is the living Christ.