

EASTER SUNDAY– 21st April 2019

**WHY DO YOU SEEK THE LIVING AMONG THE DEAD?– Biblical Commentary by
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Luke 24,1-12

But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they went to the tomb, taking the spices they had prepared. And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they went in they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men stood by them in dazzling apparel. And as they were frightened and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, “Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise.” And they remembered his words, and returning from the tomb they told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest. Now it was Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the mother of James and the other women with them who told these things to the apostles, but these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them. But Peter rose and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; and he went home marvelling at what had happened.

Chapter 24 is the chapter where the evangelist describes for us Jesus’ resurrection and his impact with the faith of the disciples, their difficulty in understanding this. But chapter 23 finishes with this phrase: “*On the Sabbath they rested according to the commandment.*” It is the women who go to the tomb to see where Jesus was buried, but they do not proceed to the anointing and embalming of Jesus because it is already Saturday. And no work can be done on Saturdays.

The evangelist denounces how the community finds it difficult to abandon the ancient habits and to open up to the novelty brought by Jesus, they still observe the commandment for the rest on the Sabbath. The observance of the law prevents us from making the experience of the risen Christ. The evangelist writes in chapter 24 “*..on the first day of the week,*” This first day recalls the first day of the creation. It is a new creation, where mankind has a life that is able to overcome death.

“*...at early dawn, they went to the tomb, taking the spices they had prepared*” . On Saturday they had failed due to the observance of the commandment. “*And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb, ...*” The evangelist does not specify the modalities “*..but when they went in they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus.*” It is clear that they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus, because they search for him in the only place where he is not for Jesus is the living, the life-giving and cannot be in the kingdom of death, in the place of the dead.

“*While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men....*” These two men we have already met in the episode of the transfiguration. They were Moses and Elijah; it is a technique of the evangelist Luke to name them only at the first appearance. Therefore they indicate Moses and Elijah

“*... stood by them in dazzling apparel.*” The same as the transfiguration “*And as they were frightened and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them....*” And what the evangelist now puts in the mouths of these two characters is a very great truth of faith that concerns not only the experience of the risen Christ, but concerns the life of all believers and their impact

with death. *“Why do you seek the living among the dead?”* The tomb is the last place where Jesus could be found. If one believes that death not only does not interrupt life, but allows the individual to enter a new, full and definitive condition, the tomb is the last place where one can be found.

When a loved one dies, even if it is painful, one must choose whether to cry him as dead or experience him as alive. If one cries as dead one goes to the tomb, but he is not there at the tomb, one must experience him as alive. Here then is the warning of these two. *“Why do you seek the living among the dead?”* You cannot search among the dead for he who continues to live.

“He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, ...” and reminds the women, the disciples of Jesus’ teaching *“...that the Son of Man must be delivered...”* he does not speak of the Messiah, but the Son of Man, that is, the man who has reached the condition, which is not an exclusive characteristic of Jesus, but a possibility for all those who follow him. And here the evangelist puts a tremendous accusation against the priestly caste in power.

“...into the hands of sinful men....” When Jesus in Galilee had announced his death, he had said; *“The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes,....”* (Luke 9,22) that means the members of the Sanhedrin, the highest juridical organ of Israel, *“...and be crucified and on the third day rise.”*

Those whom Jesus had indicated as the components now spoken of by these two characters are sinners. The people who considered themselves closest to God, the farthest from the world of sin, in reality these are the sinners, because they killed and acted against life.

“And they remembered his words,..” remembering in the way of understanding *“...and returning from the tomb they told all these things to the eleven..”* They are no longer twelve, the number will not be reconstituted. *“...and to all the rest. Now it was Mary Magdalene, Joanna”* whom the evangelist has presented us as the woman from whom the seven demons came out, Joanna, Cusa's wife, Herod's financier, *“..and Mary the mother of James and the other women with them who told these things to the apostles...”*

Here is the reaction of the disciples *“...but these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them.”* Why? Because women are not credible as witnesses. According to Jewish tradition, God had never spoken to any woman. True, he had spoken to one woman, Sara, but since she had replied with a lie, a harmless lie, from that moment on, God no longer spoke to any woman.

And because of Sara's lie, women were not considered credible witnesses. Well, the announcement of the resurrection is given to people who are not credible. *“But Peter rose and ran to the tomb;..”* it had just been said that in the place of the dead there cannot be Jesus, but Peter still does not understand and runs to the tomb.

“..stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; and he went home marvelling at what had happened.” The belief that Jesus has risen is not coming to see an empty tomb, but encountering someone living. And we meet the living, and then the evangelist will continue in the next episode of Emmaus, when Jesus breaks the bread.

When one breaks one's life for others there is the possibility of experiencing the one who has risen.

