

Lenten Devotional Reflection
11 April 2020 (Holy Saturday/Easter Eve)

Scripture: Matthew 27: 57-66 & 28:1-10 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

⁵⁷ When it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who was also a disciple of Jesus. ⁵⁸ He went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus; then Pilate ordered it to be given to him. ⁵⁹ So Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen cloth ⁶⁰ and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn in the rock. He then rolled a great stone to the door of the tomb and went away. ⁶¹ Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were there, sitting opposite the tomb.

⁶² The next day, that is, after the day of Preparation, the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered before Pilate ⁶³ and said, “Sir, we remember what that impostor said while he was still alive, ‘After three days I will rise again.’ ⁶⁴ Therefore command the tomb to be made secure until the third day; otherwise his disciples may go and steal him away, and tell the people, ‘He has been raised from the dead,’ and the last deception would be worse than the first.” ⁶⁵ Pilate said to them, “You have a guard of soldiers; go, make it as secure as you can.” ⁶⁶ So they went with the guard and made the tomb secure by sealing the stone.

¹ After the sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. ² And suddenly there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord, descending from heaven, came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. ³ His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. ⁴ For fear of him the guards shook and became like dead men. ⁵ But the angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid; I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. ⁶ He is not here; for he has been raised, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. ⁷ Then go quickly and tell his disciples, ‘He has been raised from the dead, and indeed he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him.’ This is my message for you.” ⁸ So they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. ⁹ Suddenly Jesus met them and said, “Greetings!” And they came to him, took hold of his feet, and worshiped him. ¹⁰ Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me.”

Message

Amid the coronavirus pandemic, US President Donald Trump warned Americans to brace for a “hell of a bad two weeks” ahead. The novel coronavirus not only has infected more than 1.2 million people and killed more than 68,000 worldwide, but also crippled global economy as well as transportation networks. The pandemic crisis has unmasked the dark side of human nature. Due the scarcity of safety equipment essential to the

coronavirus fight, a superpower used unfair means to obtain protective masks, “as an act of modern piracy.” In facing the sinful nature of human beings, the widespread outbreak of coronavirus, and the downturn of economy, many people find themselves living in the midst of darkness and desperation. They could not see any light at the end of the tunnel.

In the journey of Holy Week, we follow Jesus through the last week of his life, from darkness to light, from desperation to hope, and from death to resurrection. On Palm Sunday, Jesus was enthusiastically welcomed by Jerusalem crowds, but the overwhelming welcome did not last long. The same crowds demanded his death at the end of that week. Eventually, he was crucified on the cross. A group of women and disciples witnessed Jesus’ passion, crucifixion, death and burial. They lost the hope for the miracles of Jesus, their leader, their hope and their direction. They fell into abyss of darkness. It is God’s grace that they encountered angels and the risen Lord, from whom they were filled with peace, joy, and courage to bear the witness to Christ's resurrection. The Easter Vigil begins with darkness. A new fire is kindled, and the paschal candle is lighted, representing the Risen Christ, the Light of the world, which breaks into the darkness of our hearts. Jesus is the light of the world. Whoever follows him will not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.

Life always has ups and downs. No one is exempt from suffering. Even Jesus, disciples and the group of women have to go through the ordeals. If you look for a life that has total immunity to diseases, your labour will be in vain. There are always two sides to every situation or choice. The darkness of coronavirus can be a stumbling block which causes a lot of difficulties in your life or can be a stepping stone which allows your life to grow and to magnify God’s glory. You will become an angel to encourage the despair and help the weak. Learn to embrace the darkness in your life and you will have the light of life.

Reflection

1. What kind of worries and distresses have the novel coronavirus pandemic brought to you? How did you pray to God?
2. Jesus experienced the rejection from the world and died on the cross, shall we share His desperation?
3. Christ is risen! His true light shines upon our darkness, have we firmly grasped His promise?

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