

EASTER SUNDAY

Editor's note: The first reading below is the Gospel reading for the Holy Saturday Easter vigil, upon which Fr. Paul Turner reflects (at right). Following that Gospel are the readings for Easter Mass on Sunday morning.

Mark 16: 1-8

When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. And very early in the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. They had been saying to one another, 'Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?' When they looked up, they saw that stone, which was very large, had already been rolled back. As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man, dressed in a white robe, sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. But he said to them, 'Do not be alarmed; you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; he is not here. Look, there is the place they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you.' So they went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

April 3, 1994

Acts 10:34, 37-43

Then Peter began to speak to them: "I truly understand that God shows no partiality.

"That message spread throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John announced; how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. We are witnesses for all that he did both in Judea and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree; but God raised him on the third day and allowed him to appear, not to all the people but to us who were chosen by God as witnesses, and who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one ordained by God as judge of the living and the dead. All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name."

Colossians 3:1-4

So if you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth, for you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life is revealed, then you also will be revealed with him in glory.

John 20:1-9

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him." Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, and the cloth that had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Think of an event you did not fully understand when it happened. Did future happenings help you see more clearly?
2. Recall the death of a loved one. Talk with someone about your immediate feelings and how you felt later.
3. How did your faith, family, and/or faith-community help you in that event?
4. How does your belief in the resurrection affect your life? How would you describe that belief to others?

Joanne Smith □

We must tell the Good News

THE GOOD NEWS

GOD'S WORD IN EVERYDAY LIVING

By Father Paul Turner



Editor's note: The following is a commentary on the Gospel reading for the Easter vigil, Mark 16: 1-8.

THESE EIGHT VERSES changed the history of the world. If the resurrection, God's greatest miracle, is eclipsed by any other event in history, it's the miracle of Gospel — telling the story of the resurrection. These eight verses created Gospel for the first time. We've been telling the news, living the news, and rejoicing in the news ever since.

How it must have delighted Mark to have the first news of the resurrection revealed to women. Unlikely leads for this drama, they came, too weak in strength to open the stone doorway, so weak in faith they expected to anoint a lifeless body inside. The same women who had followed Jesus throughout his ministry in Galilee, who had stayed close to him during the passion (15:40-47), now fulfill their purpose to the end.

Still, as close as they were to the Son of Man, they were ill-prepared for what they saw and heard.

FIRST THEY SEE that the stone has already been rolled back. Since Mark let us overhear their conversation on the way to the tomb, we knew that the stone was large and all the women put together still could not budge it. So the rolled-back stone provides the first clue that something superhuman has happened here.

Then they see a young man in white. This image of freshness and purity prepares us to hear something brand new.

Mark has already told us the event takes place early in the morning on the first day of the week. Even the temporal reference prepares us for a new beginning.

The women hear a prophecy. The young man has read their minds. He knows whom they've come to seek. Note how he identifies Jesus: the Nazarean, the crucified. Mark wants us to know that Jesus had a reputation, a home town, and that he died a violent death. These details provide the contrast for the big news the Gospel has been

waiting to announce: "He has been raised; he is not here!"

Mark wants to convey evidence of the resurrection. The young man invites the women to look around, to see that Jesus is gone. They hear the assurance that he is alive and in the lead, going on to Galilee as he promised (14:28). There his disciples will see him. The role of this text is to proclaim that Jesus is dead and the body is gone. The role of his appearances will be to show what the absent body means; namely, life after death belongs to God, who invites us to follow.

THE NEWS GOES ON. The young man invites the women to go and tell it, to become the first preachers, apostles who will bear witness to the resurrection. Apostles, if you will, to the apostles.

All this news is meant to surprise the reader — one breathtaking disclosure after another, leaving us bug-eyed and gasping at a report too good to be true. Then as if that's not enough, Mark throws us a curve ball. Read the last sentence. The women "fled from the tomb for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid." Huh? Turn the page. Nothing more. The end. What?

Mark's ending is so abrupt that later writers patched it up with a more positive message — that women *did* proclaim the message to Peter, that Jesus *did* appear, that he appeared *several* times, and then ascended into heaven. There. That's a much better ending, right?

The problem is, Mark probably didn't write it that way. He ends the Gospel the way we hear it on Easter Sunday, with the biggest surprise of them all: *After all this, the followers of Christ were still afraid.*

WHAT HAS Mark done? He has tossed the Gospel into the reader's lap. Have we been moved by what we've read? Do we believe that Jesus is the Son of God? Do we believe in the resurrection? Then, what are we going to do about it? *We must tell the good news. We must proclaim the Gospel. We must celebrate this grand festival, which gives life its fullest meaning.*

Christians still gather for worship on the first day of the week. We keep Sunday holy because that's when the resurrection happened and we believe it has made all the difference, so much difference that we keep gathering as a community Sunday after Sunday to hear the news and tell the news again and again.

We Christians, we change the history of the world.

Father Paul Turner is pastor of St. John Francis Regis Parish, Kansas City. □

Daily Scripture Readings

Palm Sunday Sunday, March 27

Mark 11:1-10
Isaiah 50:4-7
Psalms 22:8-9, 17-20,
23-24

Philippians 2:6-11
Mark 14:1-15:47

Monday, March 28

Isaiah 42:1-7
Psalms 27:1-3, 13-14
John 12:1-11

Tuesday, March 29

Isaiah 49:1-6
Psalms 71:1-5, 15, 17
John 13:21-33, 36-38

Wednesday, March 30

Isaiah 50:4-9
Psalms 69:8-10, 21-22, 31, 33-34
Matthew 26:14-25

Holy Thursday

Thursday, March 31
Isaiah 61:1-3, 6, 8-9
Psalms 89:21-22, 25, 27
Revelation 1:5-8
Luke 4:16-21

Holy Thursday Evening

Exodus 12:1-8, 11-14
Psalms 116:12-13, 15-18
1 Corinthians 11:23-26
John 13:1-15

Good Friday

Friday, April 1
Isaiah 52:13-53:12
Psalms 31:2, 6, 12-13,
15-17, 25

Hebrews 4:14-16; 5:7-9
John 18:1-19:42

Holy Saturday Vigil

Saturday, April 2
(see page 9)

Easter Sunday

Sunday, April 3
Acts 10:34, 37-43
Psalms 118:1-2, 16-17, 22-23
Colossians 3:1-4
John 20:1-9

