



## HOMILY OF MGR NOËL SIMARD FOR EASTER SUNDAY - 12 APRIL 2020

N.B. As it is possible, it is the gospel of the Easter Vigil (Mt 28:1-10) that was proclaimed at the Easter Day Mass.

Be not afraid...He has risen from the dead!

This is what the angel said to Mary Magdalene and the other Mary who had gone to the tomb at dawn to "see the tomb".

While they are at the tomb, there is "an earthquake, and an angel comes down from heaven and rolls away the stone; this angel of the Lord looks like lightning and his garment is white. And he gives the women great news and a great revelation: Jesus the Crucified has risen from the dead. All this staging in Matthew's gospel is apocalyptic. Indeed, in the apocalyptic texts of the Bible, God's messenger wants to reassure the people to whom he speaks, and who are living through troubled and difficult times of persecution, famine, epidemic and war. Whether it is in the book of Daniel, the prophet Ezekiel or the apocalypse of John, the angel, God's messenger, reveals to a people in exile or returning from exile or to persecuted Christians that death is defeated and that life has triumphed and will triumph in spite of all the outward signs that rather announce the victory of evil or death. This is the exact opposite of the idea of the apocalypse and of what is presented to us in films such as *Apocalypse Now*, where it is about death, destruction, the end of everything.

We know and believe that Jesus was crucified, that He died and rose again. We believe that through our baptism, we have been united with Jesus who died and rose again, to die to sin and live again with new life. Indeed, through His resurrection, Christ has dispossessed death of its empire and He has opened the way to God's life for us. That is why we must look up to heaven,

as Paul invites us in his letter to the Colossians: "If you have been raised with Christ, seek the realities from above".

Despite this faith in us, we remain fearful and even terrified of the threats of the COVID-19 pandemic which brings with it sickness, anguish, economic insecurity, fear and death. It is as if the virus has brought us into a tomb, a tomb of darkness, absence, anguish, fear, worry. We doubt and wonder if we will get out of it; we wonder what help is needed to roll away the stone of mistrust and fear. Yes, where will help come from to regain confidence in the future and the dynamism to continue the march?

On this Easter day, the Risen One joins us at the edge of the tomb of our fears and doubts. As he said through the angel and repeated it himself to the women of the Gospel, this morning Jesus reassures us: "Do not be afraid, I am alive, I am with you. Do not seek me among the dead, but among the living". The whole Easter liturgy reveals to us a God with us, a God who gives life, who liberates, who saves, who makes something new.

This morning, the Lord tells us again: "Do not be afraid, for I have been with you since the creation of the world, a world that is good but which is entrusted to you to make it a common home where sharing, solidarity and respect reign". Have no fear, I am with you to free you from your anxieties, from everything that weighs on your shoulders, from servitude, isolation and death. Remember with what powerful hand I freed my people and acted against Egypt.

Do not be afraid. I have made a covenant with you and I keep my promise to bring you back from exile and make you live in your land again while you wondered how you would get out of it. Through the prophets, I have asked you to come back to me, to leave your tombs and let a new heart, a new spirit be put in you. Let us trust that what God accomplished in the past, He is still accomplishing for us today. Since our baptism, his Spirit of love has been with us and accompanies us on the sometimes tortuous and difficult road of life. Have no fear: I am the God of life and not of death. And on this Easter feast, I bring you the light that drives out the darkness of fear, hatred and withdrawal. Trust, death and sin cannot have the last word. By my

resurrection I have conquered death and I have associated you with my victory.

In the gospel we have heard, the angel sends the women on a mission: "Hurry, go and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee". Jesus gives them the same instruction after appearing to them: "Go and tell my brothers that they must go to Galilee, and there they will see me".

It is also our mission. Disciples of Christ, we are sent to proclaim the Good News of Christ's resurrection, the promise of our resurrection. In these difficult times that we are going through, we are called as never before to be witnesses of hope and joy, despite the clouds that are presently hiding the sun. Let us ask the Risen Lord, who is our light and the light of the world, to illuminate our gaze and our walk in his footsteps, especially when the step becomes heavy. Let us ask the Lord to help us make the crossing, the passage from death to life with confidence, knowing that He himself made this passage in love and out of love. And may our proclamation of the victory of Life be made not only in words but also through these gestures of mutual help, consolation, compassion, sharing and solidarity, especially towards those who are currently going through the torments of illness and death.

The soft light of Easter morning casts a unique light on our human existence and gives meaning to what at first glance seems senseless or incomprehensible. In the passage from John's Gospel proposed for Easter Sunday, Peter and John go to the tomb after Mary Magdalene, who is in a state of turmoil, to tell them that Jesus' body has been taken away and that the tomb is empty. Peter and John both enter the tomb: Peter comes out, also upset, while John sees and believes. John passes from death to life with the resurrected Jesus. Jesus has never been more present for John, whose faith springs forth like a cry of triumph and joy in the depths of his heart. John experiences the Encounter with the Risen One and moves from absence to presence, from darkness to light, from sadness to joy. He sees in the empty tomb the clue, the sign of a new life, of a new day. And at that very moment, John discovers his mission at the heart of the community and the world: to be a witness to the Presence of the Risen One. It is as if John felt in

himself, a new desire to cry out the joy of his encounter: "Jesus is alive, I will go to the ends of the earth to tell you.

To see in the empty tomb the proclamation of new life is to look at reality in a different way, sometimes confusing or incomprehensible. It means discovering in events, even difficult and disconcerting ones, a presence of love and the traces of recovery. The resurrection opens a breach of light and life on what appears to us closed, a dead-end and senseless. This is what the slogan of encouragement in the face of the current pandemic means: It's going to be all right.

In all that we are living and going through now, John's joyful and serene faith is offered to us and comes to reassure us in the midst of our doubts, sadness and fears. Let the Spirit of the Risen One drive the darkness out of our hearts; in the face of the painful disenchantment that COVID-19 causes us, let the Spirit regenerate us and reinvigorate our lives. Let us be serene witnesses of the joy and life of the Risen One!

Let us not be afraid to proclaim together: Alleluia, Alleluia, Jesus is alive, He is risen, He is our eternal springtime!

AMEN!