

On that glad night

Lent 2020 - Online Retreat with St. John of the Cross

Gospel: The empty tomb and the apparitions (Mt. 28: 1-10)

‘After the sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. 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. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. For fear of him the guards shook and became like dead men.

But the angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid; I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for he has been raised, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. 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.”

So they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. Suddenly Jesus met them and said, “Greetings!” And they came to him, 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; there they will see me.”



Easter meditation:
„In killing, you changed death to life.“

• Life in the place of death

The women can't believe their ears. They are so overwhelmed by the words of the An-

gel that they don't even seem to take the time to enter the sepulchre; they run away! They firmly believe that the crucified one they were looking for has risen from death;

not for a time, like Lazarus, but definitively. The place of death is transformed into a place of life; the place marking the end of the story for Jesus, annihilated in death, becomes the starting point of a new adventure full of life.

It's the same in the spiritual life: those who have participated in the loving death of Jesus also participate in his resurrection. They are now deeply united with Christ who has died and risen. They can appropriate the word of the believing soul in The Living Flame of Love:



«In this new life that the soul lives when it has arrived at the perfect union with God here being discussed, all the inclinations and activity of the appetites and faculties -- of their own the operation of death and the privation of the spiritual life -- become divine. (...) Thus it changed its death to life, its animal life to spiritual life. (...) Finally all the movements, operations, and inclinations the soul had previously from the principle and strength of its natural life are now in this union dead to what they formerly were, changed into divine movements, and alive to God. For the soul, like a true daughter of God, is moved in all by the Spirit of God, as St. Paul teaches in saying that those who are moved by the Spirit of God are children of God himself (Rom. 8:14) Accordingly, the intellect of this soul is God's intellect; its will is God's will; its memory is the eternal memory of God; and its delight is God's delight (...) Consequently the soul is dead to all it was in itself, which was death to it, and alive to what God is in himself. Speaking of itself, the soul declares in this verse: "In killing you changed death to life." The soul can well repeat the words of St. Paul: I live, now not I, but Christ lives in me (Gal. 2:20). The death of this soul is changed to the life of God. We can also apply the words of the Apostle absorpta est mors in victoria (1 Cor. 15:54, "Death is swallowed up in victory."), as well as those the prophet Hosea speaks in the person of God: O

death, I will be your death (Hos. 13:14). In other words: Since I am life, being the death of death, death will be absorbed in life.

The soul, then, is absorbed in divine life, withdrawn from its natural appetites and from all that is secular and temporal (...) In this state of life so perfect, the soul always walks in festivity, inwardly and outwardly, and it frequently bears on its spiritual tongue a new song of great jubilation in God, a song always new, enfolded in a gladness and love arising from the knowledge the soul has of its happy state. (Living Flame of Love 2.33-36)»

• «On that glad night»

The believer who has reached this state of union with God is then able to turn around and observe—in one glance—the unity of their life and the Providence which has led them, through light and shadow, to this state of holiness. They can reread John of the Cross' poem The Dark Night (sent in the introduction to this online retreat) and recognize the inner transformation. From now on, everything has become grace for them, for in everything they discern God's movement to make all events contribute to a greater good. Even the dark areas and trials of their life take on a new meaning: the bitter night, such a trial when they were going through it, now becomes a "glad night," "more lovely than the dawn," because that night has "guided" them to this day. They sing the Easter Vigil song of the Exultet in an existential way: "O truly blessed night..." They understand "the sanctifying power of this night" that transforms death into life and night into light. They also sing Psalm 139, recounting their own blessed history: 'If I say, "Surely the darkness shall cover me, and the light around me become night," even the darkness is not dark to you; the night is as bright as the day, for darkness is as light to you.' (Ps 139:11-12)

Those who perceive in their heart the divine flame of the Spirit does not regret having



“dared to love” on the glad adventure of that night outing; by following the Beloved in the night, they have left themselves. They have become a new person and no longer recognize themselves in their past inclinations. They now resemble the One they sought so earnestly: Jesus. The joy is perfect and we would do well to take all fifty days to celebrate it and spread it around.

Alleluia! Christ is truly risen! May the light of Easter be yours!

fr. Jean-Alexandre of the Lamb, ocd
(Avon Convent)

