



Archbishop Shelton's Pastoral Reflections

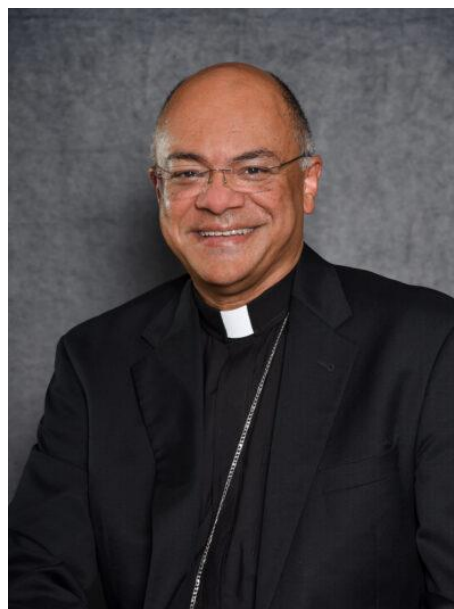
April 2, 2024

He is Risen

My Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

The Lord is truly risen, alleluia. To Him be glory and power for all the ages of eternity, alleluia, alleluia!

St. John's Gospel (see Jn 20:1-8) tells us that the first person to discover the empty tomb was Mary of Magdala. She came to the tomb early Sunday morning presumably to care for the body. When she saw that the stone had been removed, she ran and went to Simon Peter and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and told them, "They have taken the Lord from the tomb, and we don't know where they put him." St. John tells us that Peter and the other disciple hurried to the tomb to see for themselves.



Peter and his companion were the first to enter the empty tomb, but they were not the first to encounter the Risen Jesus. That honor, St. John tells us, was reserved for Mary Magdalen.

Mary stayed outside the tomb weeping. When the man she thought was the gardener asked her why she was crying, she repeated her fear that Jesus had been taken away and placed in an unknown grave. "Sir, if you carried him away, tell me where you laid him, and I will take him."

Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned and said to him in Hebrew, "Rabbouni," which means "Teacher." Jesus said to her, "Stop holding on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and tell them, 'I am going to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" Mary went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord!"

Who is this woman who was privileged according to St. John's gospel to be the first human being to encounter the Risen Lord? The Gospels tell us that she was one of a group of women who were faithful to Jesus to the end. Among these holy women, Mary Magdalen stands out. St. Thomas Aquinas called Mary Magdalen the "Apostle of the Apostles."

The Gospel of Luke tells us that before she began to follow Jesus, Mary Magdalen suffered from some kind of chronic difficulty and that "seven demons" had gone out of her. Whatever her past circumstances, Mary experienced the healing and forgiveness of Jesus, and she became someone He trusted and could rely on absolutely until the bitter end.

As a result of her personal encounter with Jesus, Mary Magdalen became a new person and a powerful witness to the Risen Lord.

Let's ask Jesus for the grace to encounter Him face-to-face. May His resurrection change our hearts and our actions. May we be faithful witnesses to Him this Easter season and always.

I pray that the joy of the Risen Christ will be in your hearts this Easter and always! Happy Easter!

Sincerely yours in the Risen Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Shelton J. Fabre". The signature is written in black ink and includes a small cross symbol at the beginning.

Most Reverend Shelton J. Fabre
Archbishop of Louisville

A Message from Pope Francis: Words of Challenge and Hope

Dear brothers and sisters, *buongiorno!*

The Gospel lets us relive the women's encounter with the Risen Jesus on Easter morning. It thus reminds us that it was them, the women disciples, who were the first to see him and encounter him.

We might ask ourselves: why them? For a very simple reason: because they were the first to go to the tomb. Like all the disciples, they too were suffering because

of the way the story of Jesus seemed to have ended. However, unlike the others, they do not stay at home paralyzed by sadness and fear: in the early morning, at sunrise, they go to honor Jesus' body, bringing aromatic ointments. The tomb had been sealed and they wonder who could have removed that stone, so heavy (cf. Mk 16:1-3). But their wish to carry out this gesture of love prevails over all else. They are not discouraged; they overcome their fears and their anguish. This is the way to find the Risen One: to emerge from our fears, to come out from our anguish.



(CNS photo/Lola Gomez)

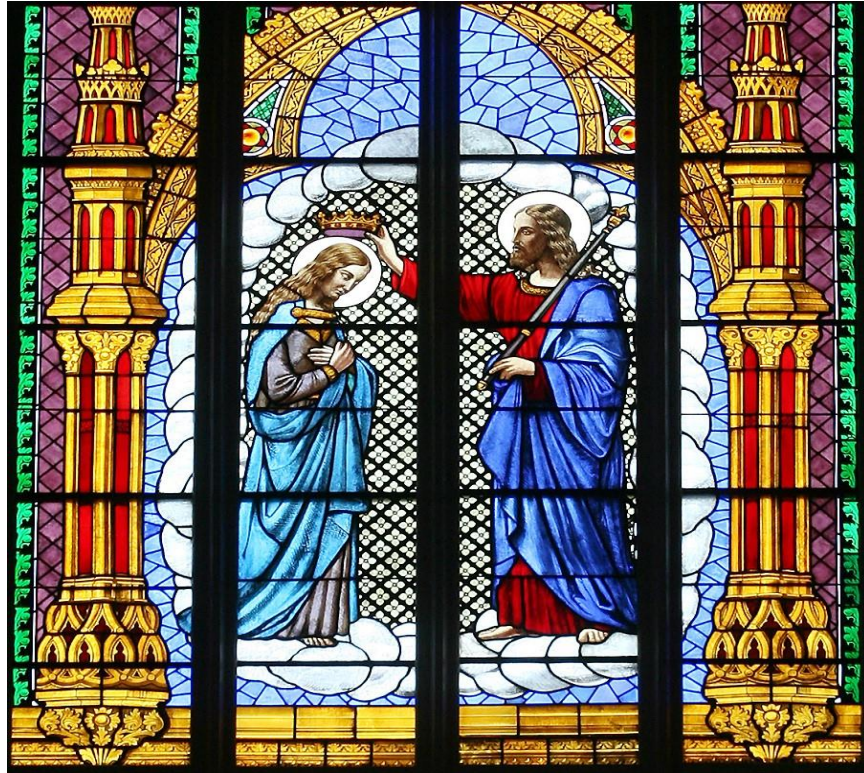
Let us retrace the scene described in the Gospel: the women arrive, they see the empty tomb and, "with fear and great joy", they run, the text says, to "tell his disciples" (Mt 28:8). Now, just as they are going to give this news, Jesus comes towards them. Let us take good note of this: Jesus meets them while they are going to proclaim him. This is beautiful: Jesus meets them while they are going to proclaim him. When we proclaim the Lord, the Lord comes to us. Sometimes we think that the way to be close to God is to keep him tightly close to us; because then, if we reveal ourselves and start to talk about him, judgements, criticisms arise, and we may not know how to respond to certain questions or provocations....Instead, the Lord comes while we proclaim him. You always find the Lord on the path of proclamation. Proclaim the Lord, and you will encounter him. Seek the Lord, and you will encounter him. Always on a journey, this is what the women teach us: we encounter Jesus by witnessing him. Let us put this in our hearts: we encounter Jesus by witnessing him....

Let us think again of the women of the Gospel: there was the sealed stone and despite this, they go to the tomb; there was an entire city that had seen Jesus on the cross and nevertheless they go to the city to announce that he is alive. Dear brothers and sisters, when one encounters Jesus, no obstacle can prevent us from proclaiming him. If instead

we keep his joy for ourselves, perhaps it is because we have not yet truly encountered him.

Brothers, sisters, faced with the women's experience we ask ourselves: tell me, when was the last time you bore witness to Jesus? When was the last time I bore witness to Jesus? What do I do today to make the people I meet receive the joy of his proclamation? And again: can someone say: this person is serene, happy, good, because he or she has met Jesus? Can this be said of every one of us? Let us ask Our Lady to help us be joyful proclaimers of the Gospel.

A selection from the Holy Father's Regina Caeli Message, Easter Monday, April 10, 2023.



Coronation Window, Cathedral of the Assumption, Louisville, Ky.

My Prayer for You

Please join me in praying the words of this ancient Easter antiphon addressed to the Blessed Virgin Mary, Queen of Heaven:

*Regina caeli, laetare, alleluia,
quia quem meruisti portare, alleluia,
resurrexit sicut dixit, alleluia;
ora pro nobis Deum, alleluia.*

Gaude et laetare, Virgo Maria, alleluia. Quia surrexit Dominus vere, alleluia.

*Queen of heaven, rejoice, alleluia.
The Son whom you merited to bear, alleluia,
has risen as he said, alleluia.
Pray for us to God, alleluia.*

Rejoice and be glad, O Virgin Mary. Alleluia! For the Lord has truly risen, Alleluia!

+Shelton J. Fabre