

Praying with the Resurrected Jesus

Grace: The grace we ask for is (in David Fleming's contemporary reading) "the grace of being able to enter into the joy and consolation of Jesus as he savors the victory of his risen life," and to live more and more fully in the spirit of the resurrection.

The Risen Jesus Goes to his Mother

There is no Scripture for this appearance, but St. Ignatius seems to assume that Jesus appeared first to his mother Mary. This is the first meditation St. Ignatius invites a retreatant to pray with in the Fourth Week of his Spiritual Exercises. Here is David Fleming's contemporary reading of this prayer exercise; your invitation is to simply follow the instructions.

Preparation: I take the time for the usual preparatory reverence before God, begging that everything in my day is more and more directed to God's service and praise.

Grace: I beg for the grace of being able to enter into the joy and consolation of Jesus as he savors the victory of his risen life.

The Setting: In the usual way, I try to enter into this contemplation as fully as I can. Although I do not have a Scripture account to guide my thoughts, I can easily know the excitement of Jesus in wanting to share the joy of his resurrection with his mother Mary who has stood by him throughout the passion. I let the delight and the love of this encounter permeate my being.

In contrast to the passion, I should note how much the divinity shines through the person of Jesus in all his appearances. The peace and the joy which he wants to share with me can only be a gift of God. To realize that the role of consoler which Jesus performs in each of his resurrection appearances is the same role he performs now in my life is a faith insight into why I can live my life in true Christian optimism.

Colloquy: According to the circumstances of the setting, I let my response be directed to one or more persons or let it be in the three-fold manner to Mary, Jesus, and God the Father. In every case, I always close the prayer period with an *Our Father*.

Jesus Appears to Mary Magdalene

John 20: 1-18

On the first day of the week, Mary of Magdala came to the tomb early in the morning, while it was still dark, and saw the stone removed from the tomb. So she ran² 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." So Peter and the other disciple went out and came to the tomb. They both ran, but the other disciple ran

faster than Peter and arrived at the tomb first; he bent down and saw the burial cloths there, but did not go in. When Simon Peter arrived after him, he went into the tomb and saw the burial cloths^a there, and the cloth that had covered his head, not with the burial cloths but rolled up in a separate place. Then the other disciple also went in, the one who had arrived at the tomb first, and he saw and believed. For they did not yet understand the scripture that he had to rise from the dead. Then the disciples returned home.

But Mary stayed outside the tomb weeping. And as she wept, she bent over into the tomb and saw two angels in white sitting there, one at the head and one at the feet where the body of Jesus had been. And they said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?” She said to them, “They have taken my Lord, and I don’t know where they laid him.” When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus there, but did not know it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?” She thought it was the gardener and said to him, “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,”^b 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 of Magdala went and announced to the disciples, “I have seen the Lord,” and what he told her.

As you engage in an Ignatian Contemplation of Jesus’ appearance to Mary Magdalene:

Be with Mary as she goes to the tomb and discovers the stone rolled away and Jesus’ body missing. Notice Mary weeping. What is she feeling?

See the encounter between Jesus and Mary Magdalene, when he proclaims “Mary!” and she says “Teacher!” What are they both feeling? What are you feeling?

Be with Mary as she runs back to the disciples and proclaims, “I have seen the Lord! What is she feeling? What is her reaction?

Let yourself enter into the joy of this moment. Converse with Jesus or Mary as you feel drawn.

The Appearances in the Upper Room

John 20:19-29

On the evening of that first day of the week, when the doors were locked, where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, “Peace be with you.” When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. The disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. [Jesus] said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.” And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained.”

Thomas, called Didymus, one of the Twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples said to him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands and put my finger into the nailmarks and put my hand into his side, I will not believe." Now a week later his disciples were again inside and Thomas was with them. Jesus came, although the doors were locked, and stood in their midst and said, "Peace be with you." Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here and see my hands, and bring your hand and put it into my side, and do not be unbelieving, but believe." Thomas answered and said to him, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus said to him, "Have you come to believe because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed."

As you pray with Jesus' first appearance in the upper room, notice the fear of the disciples, as well as how Jesus meets them in their fear.

How does Jesus address those fears? How does he address your fears?

What do you experience as Jesus says, "Peace be with you"?

As you pray with the appearance to Thomas, notice how compassionately Jesus deals with Thomas' doubts.

Can you relate to Thomas in his doubting?

Can you make the same proclamation of faith he does?

The Appearance to the Disciples on the Road to Emmaus

Luke 24:13-35

Now that very day two of them were going to a village seven miles from Jerusalem called Emmaus, and they were conversing about all the things that had occurred. And it happened that while they were conversing and debating, Jesus himself drew near and walked with them, but their eyes were prevented from recognizing him. He asked them, "What are you discussing as you walk along?" They stopped, looking downcast.

One of them, named Cleopas, said to him in reply, "Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know of the things that have taken place there in these days?" And he replied to them, "What sort of things?" They said to him, "The things that happened to Jesus the Nazarene, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, how our chief priests and rulers both handed him over to a sentence of death and crucified him. But we were hoping that he would be the one to redeem Israel; and besides all this, it is now the third day since this took place. Some women from our group, however, have astounded us: they were at the tomb early in the morning and did not find his body; they came back and reported that they had indeed seen a vision of

angels who announced that he was alive. Then some of those with us went to the tomb and found things just as the women had described, but him they did not see.”

And he said to them, “Oh, how foolish you are! How slow of heart to believe all that the prophets spoke! Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and enter into his glory?” Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them what referred to him in all the scriptures.

As they approached the village to which they were going, he gave the impression that he was going on farther. But they urged him, “Stay with us, for it is nearly evening and the day is almost over.” So he went in to stay with them. And it happened that, while he was with them at table, he took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them. With that their eyes were opened and they recognized him, but he vanished from their sight. Then they said to each other, “Were not our hearts burning (within us) while he spoke to us on the way and opened the scriptures to us?”

So they set out at once and returned to Jerusalem where they found gathered together the eleven and those with them who were saying, “The Lord has truly been raised and has appeared to Simon!” Then the two recounted what had taken place on the way and how he was made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

As Ignatius invites us to, enter into the scene, perhaps imagining yourself as one of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus.

If a stranger joined you and asked, what would you tell them?

If someone asks you today what the Easter story is all about, how would you respond?

What does it mean to recognize Jesus “in the breaking of the bread”? What are the signs and wonders by which you come to know Jesus?

How does this episode help your understanding of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus?

The Appearance on the Beach

John 21:1-19

After this, Jesus revealed himself again to his disciples at the Sea of Tiberias. He revealed himself in this way. Together were Simon Peter, Thomas called Didymus, Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, Zebedee's sons, and two others of his disciples. Simon Peter said to them, "I am going fishing." They said to him, "We also will come with you." So they went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

When it was already dawn, Jesus was standing on the shore; but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus. Jesus said to them, "Children, have you caught anything to eat?" They answered him, "No." So he said to them, "Cast the net over the right side of the

boat and you will find something." So they cast it, and were not able to pull it in because of the number of fish.

So the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord." When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he tucked in his garment, for he was lightly clad, and jumped into the sea. The other disciples came in the boat, for they were not far from shore, only about a hundred yards, dragging the net with the fish.

When they climbed out on shore, they saw a charcoal fire with fish on it and bread. Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish you just caught." So Simon Peter went over and dragged the net ashore full of one hundred fifty-three large fish. Even though there were so many, the net was not torn. Jesus said to them, "Come, have breakfast." And none of the disciples dared to ask him, "Who are you?" because they realized it was the Lord. Jesus came over and took the bread and gave it to them, and in like manner the fish.

This was now the third time Jesus was revealed to his disciples after being raised from the dead. When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." He said to him, "Feed my lambs." He then said to him a second time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." He said to him, "Tend my sheep." He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" Peter was distressed that he had said to him a third time, "Do you love me?" and he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." (Jesus) said to him, "Feed my sheep. Amen, amen, I say to you, when you were younger, you used to dress yourself and go where you wanted; but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go." He said this signifying by what kind of death he would glorify God. And when he had said this, he said to him, "Follow me."

In the chapter before this passage, the disciples receive the Holy Spirit. Why, after having received the Holy Spirit, do Peter and the others go out fishing? How do you understand their act?

Put yourself in Peter's place, with Jesus on the beach. How do you answer when Jesus asks you, "do you love me more than these"?

What does it mean to you to know that Jesus keeps inviting you over and over again and will always accept whatever you can give Him?

How is it that the disciples continually fail to recognize the risen Christ? Commenting on this failure, Fr. Timothy Radcliffe writes:

The point is not that Jesus looked different; they had never *really* seen who he was. It was more like Strider, who had always been Aragorn, the awaited king, only the eyes of the hobbits had been closed so they had only seen a rough, hard wanderer. The disciples cannot recognize Jesus because they had never grasped what it meant for him to be Messiah.

How do you see Jesus?

How does this episode help us to understand that Jesus and his ministry is not just a story of the past, but something that helps convey the continuing vitality of God's Word and work in the world?

Continuing Power of the Resurrection

In *Daybreaks: Daily Reflections for Lent and Easter Week*, Ron Rolheiser reflects on the continuing power of the resurrection in our lives, writing:

The Resurrection is not just something that happened to Jesus 2,000 years ago and will happen to each of us some time in the future after we die when our bodies will be raised to new life. It is that, but it is much more.

The Resurrection is something that buoys up every moment of life and every aspect of reality. God is always making new life and undergirding it with a goodness, graciousness, mercy, and love that, in the end, heals all wounds, forgives all sins and brings deadness of all kinds to new life.

We feel this resurrection power in the most ordinary moments of our lives. A sense of the Resurrection, understood in its deepest sense, manifests itself unconsciously in our vitality, in what we call health; in the feeling, however dimly it is sensed, that it is good to be alive. The very atomic structure of the cosmos feels and knows that resurrecting power. That is why it (like us, when we are healthy) pushes forward blindly, buoyed up by a hope that it cannot understand.

A friend of mine once sent me an Easter card that ended with the challenge: "May you leave behind you a string of empty tombs!" That is both my Easter wish and my Easter challenge for all of us. Let our wounded, muted voices begin to sing again: Christ is risen! Life is very, very good! Happy Easter!

How do you understand the resurrection event? What does it mean to you to say that you believe in Jesus Christ who rose from the dead?

What new thought, attitude, and action seem required in your life as a result of your faith in the risen Christ?

Is your faith and hope in the risen Christ the foundation of your peace and happiness, even in the face of whatever struggles and suffering you face?

The Resurrection as God's Yes

In *Meditations on the Cross*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer speaks of the resurrection as God's yes to Christ, to us, and to creation. He writes:

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is God's yes to Christ and to his atoning work. The cross was the end, the death of the Son of God, curse and judgment upon all flesh. If the cross were the last word on Jesus, then the world would be lost in death and damnation without hope, and the world would have been victorious over God. But God, who alone effected salvation for us – “all this is from God” (2 Cor. 5:18) – raised Christ from the dead. That was the new beginning following the end as a miracle from above, though not like the springtime according to a fixed natural law, but rather according to the incomparable freedom and power of God that shatters death....

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is God's yes to us. ... [B]ecause Christ was raised from the dead, our own sentence has been repealed and we have been resurrected with Christ. (1 Cor. 15). This is so because we are ourselves in Jesus Christ by virtue of God's acceptance of our human nature in the incarnation. What happens to him, happens to us, for he has accepted us. This is not a judgment from experience, but God's own judgment that seeks acknowledgement in faith in God's word.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is God's yes to the creature. It is not a destruction of embodiment, but rather the new creation of embodiment that takes place here. The body of Jesus leaves the tomb, and the tomb is empty. Just how it is possible or conceivable that the mortal, perishable body is now present as the immortal, imperishable, transfigured body remains a mystery to us.... We do know that God has judged the first creation, and has created a new creation in the exact image of the first. It is not an idea of Christ that lives on, but the real, physical Christ. That is God's yes to the new creature in the midst of the old creature. From the resurrection we know that God has not abandoned the earth, but has reconquered it, has given it a new future, a new promise. The same earth that God created bore God's Son and his cross, and on this earth the Resurrected appeared to his disciples, and to this earth Christ will return on the last day. Whoever affirms Christ's resurrection in faith can no longer flee the world, but neither can they fall prey to the world, for in the midst of the old creation they have recognized God's new creation.

How do you understand God's yes to you? What does that yes mean to you personally?

The Great Commissioning

Matthew 28:16-20

The eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had ordered them. When they saw him, they worshiped, but they doubted. Then Jesus approached and said to them, “All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son,

and of the holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age.”

Be there, at the mountain in Galilee and hear the commission as a personal one – as Jesus instructing you to go and make disciples of all nations.

What do you feel as you hear his words?

Having spent these last weeks with Jesus, what do you want to say to him in response?