

HE IS NOT HERE

March a year ago when I was in the Holy Land. I was blessed to be able to spend an hour sitting on a bench at the site of Calvary. It was early in the morning before there were crowds. As I prayed the sorrowful mysteries of the rosary, I heard our Lady speak a word in my soul. It was very simple. Her words and His words are always very simple. She said: “I died here too.” It made me cry. Yes, she died there too. Her own soul a sword DID pierce. But it did not end there. No. Actually it began there.

What began there was the beginning of the new creation that God the Father had promised. God promised our original parents when they sinned because of their lack of trust and their disobedient hearts. Eve allowed herself to be talked into something she really wanted to do. Then she appealed to Adam telling him it would be okay. And he went along because he wanted to taste the fruit also. Their mistrust of God ruined everything. It unleashed a selfish and self-reliant spirit into our world, a spirit of distrust, disorder and disharmony. It affected every human person. It affected all of creation too.

God would send his Beloved Son to take on our flesh. He would become one of us, like us in all things but sin. The original woman led the original man into sin. The new woman, Mary of Nazareth, would lead the world into the grace of a new creation because she was “full of grace.” She would allow God’s own Spirit to overshadow her. She was to conceive in her womb the One who would lead us out of our slavery to this spirit of self-reliance. She began the new creation.

And there was another Mary, Mary Magdalen, and the other women keeping vigil, washing his wounded body, not abandoning the One who had been sent. It is this same Mary Magdalen who is yearning, in her helplessness, to hear Jesus say her name again. Because she loved, she did hear his call to her.

Love can do that. LOVE DOES DO THAT. That is what is so strikingly new in all of this Easter confusion. The power of love has not only been revealed; it has been unleashed and that power has the power to make all things new. That power has the power to transform the face of the earth. And because love is personal and we are persons, we all have an opportunity to share in what Jesus has accomplished. He is risen after he died. We too will rise—on the last day. BUT. I will tell you a secret. Just as Mary spoke about her own dying on Calvary. She rose with him too that Easter Sunday morn. The real secret is this. We died too on

Calvary that day. And we have already been raised up. We too are risen as He is risen. It is for us to dare to believe the truth of what I just said.

A year ago I saw the empty tomb. I put my hands on it and prayed. It too made me cry. I am not the first person ever to weep at the tomb of Christ. But I have been raised up. Not because I went there and not because I am a priest. I have been raised up because I have been baptized into Jesus Christ just as you have. I have died with him and I have been raised up with him by his Father. And so have all of you. Whether you fully realize it yet.

You have been baptized into Christ and you live in Him. The waters of baptism have been poured. Today we renew our baptismal promises. Christ in turn, has chosen to embrace you and to lay his hands upon you and chosen to take hold of you—for all time. You are his. You have died with him. You now live with him. Do not be afraid—of anything. Do not be afraid--of anyone. Not even the evil one for his power has been destroyed. His power is the power of death and it is over. His realm was the realm of death and it has been entered by Jesus Christ. That Holy Saturday Jesus brought forth anyone and everyone who hardened not their hearts when they heard his voice. The gates of hell have not prevailed against the Body of Christ in His Head and Members. Jesus prophesied that the gates of hell would not prevail. And they have not.

Jesus is not in the grave. Do not look for him among the dead. He lives! He goes before us. Into Galilee. But more. He goes before us into our world. If you would find him, go out from here seeking Him in faith and then come back to be fed. Then go out again. Until you find him, encounter him, love him, and follow him. He really does live. Believe it! Go forth and EXPECT to meet him. And you will. I have. Many have. You are called. And chosen. His love conquers!

May the Lord bless us today and give us his peace. Happy Easter.