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## HAPPY EASTER! ALLELUIA!

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Happy Easter to each and every one of you! May the liturgical season of Easter be profitable to all. As we end the Lenten season, may we feel and even taste the presence of the Risen Christ!

### MORE THAN GREYNESS

We would be hard pressed to imagine that the Apostles could have been courageous, bold, and enthusiastic, on Easter morning... What had happened these past days had been so traumatic to them: their Master and Friend, their Messiah had been betrayed, flogged, handed over to the enemy, and put to death... Were the Apostles in any position to recall what Jesus had said when he was transfigured in their sight, that he would be put to death but that he would rise again on the third day? These last three days had certainly been tragic and of an emotional intensity that we can easily understand their panic, and how at first they had all fled throughout the city and had locked themselves behind closed doors.

### HAENDEL'S ALLELUIA

Whenever I hear Haendel's well-known *Alleluia* chorus I cannot help but think that the Apostles never benefited from such a concert. Whenever I see groups of young believers interpreting in song, acting and dance the mysteries of Holy Week, I can't help think that the Apostles could not take in in a few minutes' time the extraordinary event taking place... Like me you have attended the representation of Jesus' passion and resurrection, his death on the cross, his being laid in the tomb and, a few minutes later he is back in the midst of the church, resplendent in the white robe of the Risen One! We hear Robert Lebel's beautiful song: "Alleluia! Alleluia! Happy Easter! Happy Easter! Happy Easter! Alleluia! Who rolled the stone aside? Who stole his body? Christ is in the light! Christ has vanquished death! Tell us, you who are going down into the shadows, has he passed through there? You whom my eyes are meeting... do you not see me? Yes, you shall see the Master, for he sets an appointment with you. How will you recognise him when he visits you?" It takes some time before we can even begin to realise what is happening...

### GARDENER, FISHERMAN, COMPANION...

Women rush to the tomb early in the morning; they find nothing, not even the body of Jesus. They come across a gardener and question him, only to recognise him by the sound of his voice. Two disciples are walking to Emmaus, disappointed and discouraged; they walk a long way. The stranger explains the meaning of Scripture to them, and they recognise him at the meal he has with them. On Easter evening, the ten disciples are together, and up comes a man who shows them the wounds in his side, his hands, his feet; he gives them the Holy Spirit and forgives sins. He is recognised, it is Jesus! Jesus is decidedly found where least expected. Even after a whole night wasted trying to catch fish! He is there on the shore getting breakfast ready... A sudden swing from darkness to glaring sunlight: Paul is on his way, along the Damascus Road, to arrest the disciples, when he is blinded by the light. And in answer to Paul's question, the answer comes: "I am Jesus, the one you are persecuting..." It is truly in faith that Jesus shows himself.

## WHERE CAN WE MEET HIM TODAY?

The risen Jesus is very close to us. He is there in the midst of our lives, among his People, in the midst of the Church, at the heart of the Word. He lets himself be found in the humdrum of today. When I see the crowds acclaiming Jesus as Light of the world, at the Easter Vigil, I am sure that the Risen Jesus is there in the assembly. When all the lighted candles are raised toward the sky, with the whole Church we proclaim: "We praise you, splendour of the father, Jesus Christ, Son of God!" Every time there are two or three gathered in his name, he is there in their midst! And in July, when all these thousands of young people will gather for the World Youth Day, the Risen Jesus will be there among them. Each and every sacrament is an action of the Risen Christ, whether it is baptism, confirmation or reconciliation. He is at the heart of every Eucharist, every ordination, every marriage and every anointing of the sick. This requires a lot of faith on our part; still, he lets himself be found...

## AT THE HEART OF DAILY LIVING

Chapter 25 of Matthew's Gospel gives us excellent pointers to help us discover Jesus: "*Come, you blessed of my Father! Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, I was ill and you comforted me, in prison and you came to visit me.... I assure you, as often as you did it for one of my least brothers, you did it for me*" (vv. 34-36, 40). Through these brothers and sisters of ours we can, through faith, discern the presence of the Risen Christ, with no fanfare, no brilliant light, but still truly present at the heart of daily living.

## FAITH AND HOPE

It is this great mystery of the Resurrection that I invite you to celebrate and proclaim throughout your lives. The music of Bach and Haendel witnessed in centuries passed to their deep faith in the Risen Christ: "Jesus, our Master, has risen! He has appeared, in bright beauty. Heavens, fertile earth, join me, and you, depths of the sea, praise the great King. The earth is open, the Master has appeared, his tomb is empty, as he predicted. Rejoice, my soul! Triumph, my heart, hail and proclaim Jesus, the conqueror king. Filled with love for you, Oh Saviour, with gladness I offer my heart. I love you and hope that, throughout eternity I shall see you and praise you in the fullness of light." Nowadays, it is still the same hope, the same faith that are proclaimed: "Easter, the springtime of God, Easter, springtime of the world, Easter, springtime of the heart, Easter of Jesus Christ! When the longed-for buds are renewed on the branches, when the snow geese fly back from their migration, we shall celebrate today's sweet revenge of the past. And as on that first Sunday, the rebirth of the First-Born. When the ice floes are split by the rushing streams and the icy masses let the water through, we shall celebrate the miracle of the cleft in the tomb... and as on that first Sunday, the victory of the Lamb! When the earth trembles at the coming of the dawn and our barren land lights up in colour, we shall celebrate the mystery of a flower-decked cross! And as on that first day, the Saviour's light!" (Robert Lebel)

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