

EASTER TUESDAY
(Acts 2:36-41; John 20:11-18)

Penance rite:

In today's address by St. Peter, he says, "Let the whole house of Israel know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified." With equal truth it could be said that WE have crucified Him by our sins. Let us therefore turn to God in sorrow.

Lord, we have sinned a y LHM
Lord, show us your mercy and
love

Homily: Today's gospel is certainly one of the most beautiful. We love the suspense as Mary does not at once recognize Jesus, then her joyful surprise as she does. But in this episode as a whole, which continues Sunday's reading, most emphasis is on the empty tomb. We are so taken up with post-resurrection appearances

that we may fail to recognize the importance of the empty tomb. It was, in fact, the first indication of Jesus' resurrection. In view of His predictions, we might think the empty tomb would be all that would be needed. We might be tempted to think the evangelists had added the angels only to assure us... of the meaning of the empty tomb.

The angels do, in fact, appear in a bewildering variety of ways. In Mark, the earliest of the gospels, the women, coming to the tomb, find the stone already rolled away, and a young man in a white robe. He is not identified as an angel, but he does what the angel is supposed to do, i.e., tell them, "He has been raised; he is not here. Behold the place where they laid him."

In Matthew it is very dramatic: An angel descends from heaven, rolls back the stone and sits upon it. His face was like lightning and at the sight of him the guards became as dead men. But his message to the women was the same:

"He is not here, for he has been raised."

With Luke we are much taken by the report of Jesus' encounter with the disciples on the road to Emmaus; but before that happened, at daybreak, the women were at the tomb and were puzzled at not finding the body of Jesus; here two men in dazzling garments appear, ask them "why do you seek the living one among the dead? He is not here, but he has been raised." But when they told this to the apostles, "their story seemed like nonsense and they would not believe them."

Today's gospel from John, which continues our Easter reading, is all about the empty tomb. Remember, it begins with Mary coming to the tomb at the crack of dawn and finding the stone removed. She runs to Peter and John, who run to the tomb. Peter enters, sees the burial cloths and leaves. This corresponds to Luke's account: after the women's report, Peter ran to the tomb, saw the burial cloths

and went home amazed—no word of faith here. The important point in John's account is that now the beloved disciple "sees and believes." For him the empty tomb is enough; that is because he is the ideal disciple and represents what our faith should be—no angels, no sight of the risen Savior, only the empty tomb, but he believes.

There are angels in John's gospel, but they are rather unhelpful. Rather than proclaiming the good news, as angels at the tomb are supposed to do, they ask Mary why she is weeping. They may be excused because Jesus' immediate appearance was a more compelling answer than they could give. That Mary first mistakes Jesus as gardener reminds us of the Garden of Eden and Jesus as new Adam. But she does recognize Him, and we ought to experience her joy of recognition as He calls her by name."

All this is instructive for us as believers. Mary was the first to see the risen Lord because she

loved so much. Why was John first to "see and believe," though Peter had seen the same as he? This reminds that faith is a gift, given as God wills. We have it and so must give thanks to God, who gives "to those far off, whomever the Lord our God will call."

How do we, who claim to be believers, know we have faith? Our intellectual grasp of religious truths is not faith, but only its foundation. We have faith if we recognize God as the almighty One to whom we owe total, unwavering allegiance, alone worthy of unflinching love, we place all our hope in Him, and strive to carry out His basic command, to love our neighbor as ourself--and desire above all to share a blessed eternity with Him. Because we are weak and our faith always needs strengthening, we must make our own the prayer of the epileptic's father, "I do believe, Lord; help my unbelief."