



THE VOICE OF SAINT MARK

Podcast of the Coptic Orthodox Tradition

Parish of Saint John the Theologian – Dijon

Episode:

Easter Night

Gospel of Matthew 28:1–10 | Easter Night

Coptic Orthodox Tradition

Episode Presentation

On this most holy day of Easter, we celebrate the victory of life over death, of light over darkness. After the silence of the tomb, a new and unexpected word breaks forth, shattering all our expectations: Christ is risen.

In this homily, we enter into the wonder of the first witnesses of this announcement — those women who came to the tomb carrying their grief and anxiety, only to become the first heralds of a hope that does not disappoint. Their encounter with the Risen Lord transforms their fear into joy, their silence into mission.

Let us receive this word not as a memory of the past, but as a living reality that comes to meet us today, wherever we are.

Let us now hear the Holy Gospel:

Gospel of Matthew 28:1–10

- 1** Now after the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to look at the grave.
- 2** And behold, a severe earthquake had occurred, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled away the stone and sat upon it.
- 3** And his appearance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow.
- 4** The guards shook for fear of him and became like dead men.
- 5** The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid; for I know that you are looking for Jesus who has been crucified."
- 6** "He is not here, for He has risen, just as He said. Come, see the place where He was lying."
- 7** "Go quickly and tell His disciples that He has risen from the dead; and behold, He is going ahead of you into Galilee, there you will see Him; behold, I have told you."
- 8** And they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy and ran to report it to His disciples.
- 9** And behold, Jesus met them and greeted them. And they came up and took hold of His feet and worshiped Him.
- 10** Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid; go and take word to My brethren to leave for Galilee, and there they will see Me."

Let us now listen to the homily of Father Roland:

Homily

✠ In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, one God, Amen. ✠

On this most holy day, a new joy is given to the world. A joy that nothing can take away, a joy that does not depend on circumstances, for it springs from Christ's victory over death. This joy does not come from us: it bursts forth from the empty tomb. Christ is risen, and we rise with Him.

For the great miracle of this day is not only what was accomplished in history. It is also what is offered to us personally, today. We too are recipients of a miracle: we who have risen with Christ, we who now have access to eternal life. By His death, He conquered death; by His resurrection, He recreates us. We are no longer merely drawn from the dust, but born of water and Spirit, become a new creation.

As Saint Paul tells us in his Second Epistle to the Corinthians: "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation." When we speak of the resurrection of Christ, as with all the mysteries of His life, we are not speaking of an event exterior to us. We speak of a mystery that was accomplished for us, in us, and not in our place. Christ is the God made man in whom all humanity is assumed and brought to fulfilment, as the Fathers teach — from Saint Gregory of Nazianzus to Saint Irenaeus.

This is why Saint Paul can say with boldness, in the Epistle to the Romans: we were crucified with Him, we died with Him, and we rose with Him. What greater joy than this! Our life is already hidden in His, in that of Christ. And the Lord Himself reveals this mystery to us in the Gospel of John: "You are in me, and I am in you."

Saint Cyril of Alexandria expresses this reality with force: the Word of God, by uniting Himself to flesh, recapitulated in Himself the whole of human nature. In Christ, His divinity is united to His humanity, and in Him all humanity is gathered, healed, and restored.

Death and suffering had entered the world because of the Fall, and they were altogether unfitting for the Son of God. And so, in His ineffable self-emptying and inexpressible love, Christ took upon Himself what weighed upon us in order to free us from it. As Saint Athanasius the Great says with luminous simplicity: "God became man so that man might become God."

Saint Paul confirms this once more in the Epistle to the Ephesians: "God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ. He raised us up with Him."

Thus we have been transferred from a humanity marked by death in Adam to a humanity living eternally in Christ. Such is the heart of our faith, founded upon this word of the Lord in the Gospel of John: "I am the resurrection and the life; whoever believes in Me, though he die, yet shall he live."

And this salvation is a gift. Saint Paul says it again: "For by grace you have been saved through faith." For the justice of God is not first punitive: it is mercy. Saint Isaac the Syrian reminds us: "Do not call God just; His justice is revealed in His mercy."

Yes, if Christ died for us, it was to conquer death and to make us share in His eternal life. His passion, His Cross, His resurrection do not abolish the suffering of the world, nor even biological death. But they destroy its power: the power to enclose us in despair. They abolish the dominion of death.

Saint John Chrysostom proclaims in his Paschal Homily: "Christ is risen, and not one of the dead remains in the tomb." Henceforth, if we remain united to Christ and receive His grace, we need no longer fear death. Our hope is eternal life.

And even our sufferings, if we offer them to Him, become a path of life. Saint Paul says to the Colossians: "I complete in my flesh what is lacking in Christ's afflictions." And so, with Him, we can proclaim in joy: "O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" The sting of death is sin.

Today, the Church invites us to enter fully into joy. A joy that can dwell even in our tears, a joy born of this certainty: we are loved, we are saved, we are raised up. As Saint Isaac the Syrian whispers to us, the heart of God burns with love for all creation.

Yes, it is this love that comes to meet us today and fills the Church with joy. A supernatural joy, a divine joy, founded on the love of God.

Let us not remain at the edge of the tomb. Let us not remain enclosed in our old sorrows. Let us open our hearts as the tomb is opened. Let us receive this life. Let the resurrection illumine our existence, and let us live from this moment as the risen.

To the Risen Christ, who through death has conquered death and granted us eternal life, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

✠ To him be glory for ever and ever. Amen. ✠