

"You know what has happened all over Judea, beginning in Galilee." These words of Peter resound in our hearts as we have walked the reflective days of Lent... gathered for the sacred Triduum... and bear witness now to the resurrection of our Lord.

In his book Remember Jesus Christ, the Capuchin Father Rainero Cantalamessa echoes the words of Peter with this reflection: "Christ is more real than ever, and a creative new proclamation about him is urgent. We need to make people understand that believing in Jesus Christ is something extraordinary and marvelous and enriches life immensely. It opens a new dimension within our being, and we never again feel alone at the core of our being and our soul. It throws open the door toward that infinite Light that John speaks of in his gospel. The extraordinary thing about the light of Christ is that, in its essence, it is supreme love."

Soak in that profound reality: "the light of Christ is...in its essence...supreme love." No one knew that better than Peter. We know that Peter was so close to our Lord. He loved him and counted on him. Yet, in a moment of weakness, when Jesus needed him most, Peter denied even knowing him.

Imagine how that must have made both men feel: the betrayer and the betrayed. How many times in our own lives have we been placed in these same roles? Does Jesus condemn Peter? Does he condemn us? No! Because he is supreme love, Jesus loves us even more deeply. Peter, who has been through a harrowing experience, gets it: everything that Jesus spoke of and promised during his public ministry has come to fruition. Having faced his own cowardice and ambivalence about loyalty and love, Peter is now free to proclaim the Good News that Christ has indeed risen from the dead.

The Easter grace transforms us anew as human beings-to be more ardently configured to the person of Jesus Christ.

The late Jesuit Cardinal Carlo Maria Martini, in his book I Believe in Eternal Life encapsulates so beautifully the essence of the meaning of this Easter morning. He writes that "... eternity, the new and definitive life, has already entered my experience through the death and resurrection of Jesus. It is lived by me, here and now, in the indestructibility of the actions that I perform: of love, fidelity, pardon, friendship, honesty, responsible freedom, gestures in which I mysteriously surpass time reaching eternity in the measure in which I entrust myself to the life and eternity of the Crucified Risen One who has conquered death."

Imagine that... eternity is not a dreamed deferred but an invitation to enter into the Christian reality by trying to live as best we can the message of Peter in Acts: "This man God raised on the third day and granted that he be visible, not to all the people, but to us, the witnesses chosen by God in advance... "Because we have had a personal encounter with Jesus Christ through the sharing of the Eucharist, and because he forgives us time and time again, we are called... indeed invited... to be the face of Christ in the world.

How do we rise to this seemingly daunting challenge in our complex and dynamic society and culture? We can begin by recalling the words of Saint Paul to the Colossians: "Think of what is above, not of what is on earth." This does not suggest that we abandon our daily responsibilities and live in some fantasy zone. It is, rather, to emulate Jesus who was imminently "down to earth," who met people in the rugged terrain of their lives and thus irrevocably changed and healed them.

He was accessible to them... approachable. Each of us can be the same, and when we are, we bring light to those who are burdened by the difficulties and obstacles of life. We develop the integrity to face our own shortcomings and failings and therefore show compassion and forgiveness to others. We take stock of all that God has given to us and magnanimously share that abundance with others.

We do not need to leave here today thinking this is beyond our capacity. If that were the case, why would God have sent flawed human beings to his tomb... profoundly human characters like Mary Magdalene and Peter? It is Peter, who loved yet betrayed his friend, who enters the tomb first. This is an expression of how God operates: with perfect love, never counting the cost of our own human weakness, transforming us anew again and again.

If we remain steadfast in our prayer, in our need for reconciliation, in our sincere desire to let go of our preoccupations and simply "come and see," we will be witnesses to the world that Christ Jesus is indeed alive.

Pope Saint John Paul II spoke some words on the Boston Common in 1979 that reflect the joy but also the mission we share today. He said, "... the reason for my mission, for my journey...is to tell you, to tell everyone - young and old alike - to say to everyone in the name of Christ: 'Come and follow me!' Follow Christ! You who are married - share your love and your burdens with each other; respect the human dignity of your spouse; accept joyfully the life that God gives through you; make your marriage stable and secure for your children's sake. Follow Christ! You who are single or who are preparing for marriage. Follow Christ! You who are young or old. Follow Christ! You who are sick and aging; who are suffering or in pain. You who feel the need for healing, the need for love, the need for a friend... follow Christ! To all of you - I extend in the name of Christ - the call, the invitation, the plea: 'Come and follow me.' I call you to Christ-to call all of you to live in his love, today and forever! Amen!"