



**Acts 10:34-43; 1 Corinthians 15:19-26; Luke 24:1-12**  
**Reverend Giuseppe Mattei (April 20, 2025)**

The women who went to the tomb after the Sabbath had no clue that they were about to celebrate the first Easter. In fact, they went to the tomb meaning to anoint Jesus' body according to the Jewish rituals of burial. They didn't know they were up for a big surprise!

They went, oil in hand, at the break of dawn on that first day of the week, numb and overwhelmed by grief. They saw through the tears that the stone closing the tomb had been removed. Perhaps, they were grateful for that: they had access and could go through the soothing motion of performing the prescribed rituals.

They soon realized that they had one huge problem: the body was not there! Imagine the panic and the upset. Heartbreak compounding on heartbreak.

All of us have dealt with **death**. Death is part of life and is inescapable. It's hard to accept the end of life as we know it of a loved one. We don't want to let go. We don't want to believe let alone admit that our loved one has been ripped from our heart, and we won't see them, be with them ever again.

Death steals away the one we have built memories with, the one who has given us so much, the one who has filled our heart and our days with love and made us who we are.

**Premature death** is even worst. We ask the “Why?” question with insistence. We challenge God to give us a suitable answer. We argue there are no plausible reasons why we are still here, and they are already gone.

When it comes to **violent death**, there is only horror, only contempt for the cruelty. There are “Why?” questions alright, but they are about the lack of humanity and compassion of the abuser.

One questions the sanity of the whole situation: there are no reasons for violent deaths apart from contempt for life and the absurd belief that one can use power to affirm one’s power and superiority complex.

When it comes to **violent death**, there is only horror, only contempt for the cruelty. There are “Why?” questions alright, but they are about the lack of humanity and compassion of the abuser. Death by violence is the extreme abuse of power, the ultimate decision that another person’s life does not matter. And it’s intended to terrorize, to send a message, to cow down.

So, the women – terrorized and scared – went to the tomb, risking the charge of association with Jesus, a “proven” and executed terrorist and enemy of the State,

and therefore of being of the same mind and sentiment towards the Romans and the Jewish leadership.

They went to the tomb and found...nothing!

Luke tells us that they were perplexed about that. And in the confusion of figuring out what was going on, two men in brilliant cloths appeared and nonchalantly asked them a “Why?” question: “Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here but has risen.”

The women were looking for signs of death, a body to anoint, but were given a shocking news: Jesus is risen just as he had announced. An empty tomb unlocks signs of life for those willing to see.

They ran to report the incredible news to the eleven disciples who were themselves on the lookout for possible reprisals against them since they were known followers of his. The disciples’ reaction? Unbelief.

How could they possibly believe such extraordinary news? Who’s ever been known to be risen before the end of time? Moreover, women were not credible witnesses in a court of law. Their testimonies were not considered as reliable as those of men, which added another layer of skepticism to the disciples’ reaction.

In the context of their grief, fear, and anticipation of potential danger, the news of Jesus’ resurrection seemed impossible, a cruel joke perhaps. The disciples were grappling with the loss of their leader, their hopes dashed

and their future uncertain. To hear that Jesus was alive went against everything they understood about life and death. The notion of resurrection was not just miraculous, it was unfathomable, doubt was the natural response.

Think about that: how different is their reaction to the news from yours? What's your approach to the resurrection of Jesus, to the possibility of *your* resurrection? What do you make of the empty tomb? Is it an indication of life? Does logic help or should we venture into the field of faith? And is faith wishful thinking, a child's affair? Or is it an inner certainty and trust, an unwavering conviction in something, Someone, greater than oneself, the confidence in what we hope for and the assurance about what we do not see?<sup>1</sup>

In today's gospel selection, Peter stood up and ran to the tomb. There he found the linens that covered Jesus' body by themselves. Then, Luke tells us, Peter "went home, amazed at what had happened."

Weeks or, maybe, months later, empowered by the Spirit of God, we find him proclaiming to large crowds that Jesus is "the one ordained by God as judge of the living and the dead." He is telling them: Jesus is the *one* they were waiting for, the one they can bet their life on! And referring to the prophets of old, he told them in his own words that belief in Jesus means receiving the forgiveness of sins.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Hebrews 11:1

<sup>2</sup> Acts 10:43

Resurrection means that life has the last word over death, that truth and goodness triumph over lies, cruelty and injustice. It is a profound statement of hope and renewal, a promise that in the end, love conquers all. This belief inspires us to live with courage and compassion.

The resurrection of Jesus challenges us to look beyond the despair and darkness of our world and to embrace the transformative power of divine love.

As we contemplate the empty tomb, we are invited to reflect on our own lives and to seek the signs of life and resurrection that surround us.

Maybe, the hurt is so unbearable that we hold on to the rock that shuts our heart. Or maybe, the rock is removed but we are still looking for signs of death.

Are we willing to consider that the absence of a sign of death might be the beginning of new life?

That emptiness is not necessarily void?

That darkness isn't, inevitably, hopelessness?

Jesus rose, so he's vindicated, he's the One. Can you see yourself opening up to that news? Can you find new strength to trust his life-giving words?

I can't explain to you how the resurrection happened. What I can tell you is that because I believe, I do not fall into despair, my heart does not stay closed: I trust the new life that forgiveness gives me. And because of that new

life, I can love, I can put myself out there with compassion, with generosity, with hope, with trust. Resurrection has brought grace into my life. May it mean the same to you.

Hear once again the Easter message: Jesus is risen. He is risen, indeed. Amen.