

Easter Sunday: Acts 10:34, 37-43. Col 3:1-4 or 1 Cor 5:6-8. Jn 20:1-9 or Mk 16:1-7.

The Easter vigil actually has 9 readings!:

Gen 1:1-2:2. Gen 22:1-18. Ex 14:15-15:1. Is 54:5-14. Is 55:1-11. Baruch 3:9-15, 32-4:4. Ez 36:16-28. Rom 6:3-11. Lk 24:1-12.

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The Gospel on Sunday will be either of these two:

Jn 20:1-9

On the first day of the week, Mary of Magdala came to the tomb early in the morning, while it was still dark, and saw the stone removed from the tomb. 2 So she ran and went to Simon Peter and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and told them, "They have taken the Lord from the tomb, and we don't know where they put him." 3 So Peter and the other disciple went out and came to the tomb. 4 They both ran, but the other disciple ran faster than Peter and arrived at the tomb first; 5 he bent down and saw the burial cloths there, but did not go in. 6 When Simon Peter arrived after him, he went into the tomb and saw the burial cloths there,

7 and the cloth that had covered his head, not with the burial cloths but rolled up in a separate place. 8 Then the other disciple also went in, the one who had arrived at the tomb first, and he saw and believed. 9 For they did not yet understand the scripture that he had to rise from the dead.

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Mk 16:1-7.

When the sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary, the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go and anoint him. 2 Very early when the sun had risen, on the first day of the week, they came to the tomb. 3 They were saying to one another, "Who will roll back the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?" 4 When they looked up, they saw that the stone had been rolled back; it was very large... 5 On entering the tomb they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a white robe, and they were utterly amazed. 6 He said to them, "Do not be amazed! You seek Jesus of Nazareth, the crucified. He has been raised; he is not here. Behold the place where they laid him. 7 But go and tell his disciples and Peter, 'He is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him, as he told you.'"

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The first reading will be this:

Acts 10:34, 37-43.

Then Peter proceeded to speak and said, "In truth, I see that God shows no partiality... 37 what has happened all over Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached, 38 how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the holy Spirit and power. He went about doing good and healing all those oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. 39 We

are witnesses of all that he did both in the country of the Jews and (in) Jerusalem. They put him to death

by hanging him on a tree. 40 This man God raised (on) the third day and granted that he be visible, 41 not to all the people, but to us, the witnesses chosen by God in advance, who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. 42 He commissioned us to preach to the people and testify that he is the one appointed by God as judge of the living and the dead. 43 To him all the prophets bear witness, that everyone who believes in him will receive forgiveness of sins through his name."

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The second reading will be either of these two:

Col 3:1-4.

If then you were raised with Christ, seek what is above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. 2 Think of what is above, not of what is on earth. 3 For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ your life appears, then you too will appear with him in glory.

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1 Cor 5:6-8.

Your boasting is not appropriate. Do you not know that a little yeast leavens all the dough? 7 Clear out the old yeast, so that you may become a fresh batch of dough, inasmuch as you are unleavened. For our paschal lamb, Christ, has been sacrificed. 8 Therefore let us celebrate the feast, not with the old yeast, the yeast of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

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MEDITATION:

This Sunday is about **'THE'** Good News of our lives - the best news - the Resurrection. Jesus rose many years ago, and the marvel is that that opens the door for us all to follow.

This day always makes me remember how upsetting it is in hospital medicine for doctors to break bad news. Approaching death is upsetting. And it's going to happen to us all. Every doctor knows well, that some day the guy on the death-bed will be himself! But the story changes completely with the event that happened that morning near Jerusalem. Imagine if your job on the cancer ward were to tell the patient that we've come across a cure! You wouldn't keep it quiet! It even makes some crazy doctors put their career on the sideline to become religious missionaries!

I'll never forget the first day I was at the post-mortem dissection of bodies. I went home in silence thinking of the fact that one day the lump of flesh and bones on the table won't be a strange 'homo-sapiens' ...it'll be me! But a guy was willing to get scourged at a pillar and nailed to a wooden cross to convince me that this 'homo-sapiens' needn't end up as ashes and dust. He can end up in an eternal paradise. And that 'guy' was the Son of God. He IS the Son of God. His friends didn't slip away into the silence in order to escape getting nailed

themselves. On the contrary, they started running around shouting the news to everyone and it has passed down two thousand years to us. Some did actually get their mouths shut and even persecuted, but that didn't stop them shouting even louder! I've never had any strange vision of the risen Christ, but I've looked a lot at his word that's been handed down to us, and I've been inspired a lot by those who've followed his word over the centuries, and I've felt like a light-bulb that's been connected and turned on! Who can explain it? I can't - and I don't need to, because LOVE doesn't get 'explained' - it just happens to you!

Perhaps it's not of great relevance, but since the light has reached our darkness, Easter is actually dated each year on the Sunday after the first full moon after the spring equinox. The name 'Easter' actually comes from the fact that the sun rises in the East. Churches and temples were positioned over history so that the light of sunrise enters through the main window.

On the Vigil we have the symbol of lighting the Pascal fire. The Life and Love of God are on offer to resolve our darkness. The very first sentences of the Bible include this: 'God said, "Let there be light," and there was light.' (Gen 1:3). The curing of the blind in the Gospel is very relevant. With regard to light, the physical reality itself is mysterious. Science simply cannot define if light is just a certain type of energy, or if it has material substance (photons). It moves at 300km per second, but what exactly is moving? Science can't tell (at least yet). So it's good to know that some realities simply go beyond human knowledge! There lies Christ!

My beloved father died in 1999, but if he were to drop in to my pad for a cup of tea tomorrow, I think the roof would fall down with the joy of my "hello". But the truth is that I am going to see him in a while – in exactly how long, I can't say, but the truth is that it doesn't matter exactly how long. What we'll be sharing in a while, will be more like champagne and caviar than 'a cup of tea'. It'll be Irish coffee – along with many songs and dances. I hope he can dance better than he did before! I'm sure he will... perhaps more like an angel with wings!

Also, it's interesting the way the roles of male and female are combined in the readings today. Mary saw the changes at the entrance to the tomb first, while it was the two Apostles that went inside and saw even more. Peter didn't actually get there first. Was he perhaps a little chubby?!! Mary was the first to pass some news on, while the lads checked it out and went further. It's a little later that the Good News of the Resurrection appears - when they see Jesus himself, but again it's a message that gets 'passed on'. I think that God is calling us all today, to be people that 'pass on' the news! When that struck me a few years ago, it was as if a Resurrection took place inside of me, and I became a missionary! In this world of e-mails, a good one is the 'Easter-mail'!

The large Pascal candle is marked with the letters alpha and omega, because they're the beginning and the end of the Greek alphabet - like the A and Z of today for us. It symbolizes that Christ is our beginning and our end. Revelation chapter 21 uses those letters also. The Jews had the name 'Yahweh' which means 'the foundation of all existence' - 'the one who is', and in the Gospel, Jesus says "Before Abraham came to be, I AM".

The name 'Pascal' for Easter comes from 'Pesach' which is 'Passover'. It recalls the passing over from slavery in Egypt to freedom. The Jews have a liturgical narration of the Israelites' slavery in Egypt and their liberation by God through Moses. It forms the heart of the Seder meal at the Jewish festival of Pesach (Passover). The story is dramatized by question and answer, and inter-dispersed with songs, discussion, prayers, and psalms.

Of course, what we Christians celebrate isn't simply the resurrection of Christ many years ago but also his resurrection today in each of us. But it's good to renew it. We were baptized as infants without us asking or saying more than "aaaah", so the Vigil includes a renewal of Baptismal promises.

This birth of Christianity isn't a casting out of the Old Testament of the Jews but it's fulfillment! The Jews had managed to complicate their worship in the temple, and ended up crucifying Jesus, but the 'New Covenant' of Christ has resolved that. Christ has established what the Letter to the Hebrews calls the 'new order'. That entrance into the inner chamber, which only the 'high priest' would do, and only once a year, is actually a prophecy of what Jesus was going to accomplish by dying on the Cross and rising from the dead! To quote an Old Testament psalm: 'The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone...' (Ps 128:22).

On our model crucifixes we see 'INRI' which comes from what the Romans had written on the real cross: 'Iesus Nazareno Rex Iudorum' - 'Jesus of Nazareth - King of the Jews'. It was written in 4 languages on the cross of Jesus but it's probably written much larger and in 'diamond' in heaven! The 'crown of thorns' is now a crown of beauty beyond description. The crown of thorns has become a crown of hope for us – a hope that never fails.

Ask yourself "How could we possibly see the resurrection of Christ nowadays?", and one clear answer is "By loving!", because it's thereby that tremendous fruits will be seen in our own lives. Let's keep in mind what St Paul says in the Bible: 'If you've risen with Christ then seek the things of heaven'. Let's not be too preoccupied seeking the passing things of this passing world - this Pascal world!

With regard to meeting my dad, I wrote that it doesn't matter how long the wait, but I think it does matter with regard to how I can get this GOOD NEWS across to as many as possible along the way... even in a wheelchair. Part of the good news is that that 'I' is now 'WE'! As St Paul says to the Corinthians (second reading), we can all become a fresh batch of dough. Let's get well leavened and tasty!

..... Dara.