

Homily for Easter Sunday

Alleluia! It's Easter Sunday. And while there're many important topics that I *could* speak about this morning, I want to talk about one that's on many people's minds today: clothing! Think about it. We're only together for an hour or so this morning for holy Mass. But how much time did you moms maybe spend looking for new Easter clothes for your children? Or how much time did you guys spend trying to find that particular tie? Or how often do the younger kids ask how soon they can change out of their "good clothes"? Yes, it seems as *basic* a function that clothing has, so much time is spent with regards to it, especially on big days like today!

And we're not alone. Even the Bible seems to speak quite a bit about clothing. Take for example, the Book of Genesis. After Adam and Eve had willfully disobeyed their heavenly Father, we hear that "they sewed fig leaves together and made loincloths for themselves." And in the Gospel on Good Friday, there were several mentions of clothing, like when Pilate sent Jesus to be scourged, and the soldiers clothed Him in a purple cloak AND when the soldiers took Jesus' clothes and divided them for shares, casting lots for his tunic.

But one very important reference to clothing, that perhaps you didn't even pick up on, occurred in our Gospel today. Here, St. John tells us that after Mary Magdalene realized that the huge stone blocking the entrance to Jesus' tomb had been rolled away, she immediately thought that someone had stolen Jesus' body during the night. In hurrying back to get Peter and John, they come running right to the tomb, and we hear the following scene unfold: Simon Peter "went into the tomb and saw the burial cloths there, and the cloth that had covered his head, not with the burial cloths but rolled up in a separate place. Then the other disciple also went in, the one who had arrived at the tomb first, and he saw and believed."

Now, what's so significant about this? Well, for those of us who know how the story ends, maybe nothing. We know that Jesus' body was not stolen that He truly trampled down death by death and rose from the grave! But for those disciples of Jesus, who only knew that their Messiah had been executed, it was a different story. They were struggling with the thought that it was all over. No more miracles. No more Kingdom of God. Time to go back to the Sea of Galilee and fish. And now to top it all off, this – a report that someone had stolen their beloved rabbi's body. But then there was the *clothing*: the cloth that had covered Jesus' head – in Greek, the 'sudarium' – was neatly rolled up setting in a separate place.

Now, if some grave robbers had come to steal Jesus' body, do you honestly think they would have taken the time to un-wrap him, and then leave behind those very expensive burial garments? Of course not! And this is what that "other disciple", namely St. John, the author of this Gospel, was quick to realize. And this is why He came to believe and understand that somehow, by the power of God, a miracle had taken place, and Jesus had been raised from the dead.

But, what if that "other disciple" was you? How would you have reacted? What would you have done? How would your life afterwards have been different?

My brothers and sisters, in a very real way, we **are** that beloved "other" disciple. And upon hearing the news *again* today that Jesus, who "suffered death and was buried" is now risen from the dead, we have to respond. The Crime Scene Investigators of CSI Calvary have reported the incontrovertible evidence that Jesus is somehow alive. But what does that mean for me? I propose that we cannot hear the news that the Son of God was really killed, only to later be found "un-dead", and then just continue on our merry way. We have to make a decision – and there are only two options: for or against. We can be *for* Jesus, like St. Peter, who proclaimed by word and deed, that Jesus was risen, as we heard in our first reading today. Or, we can be against Him, like many of the scribes, Pharisees, and people of His time, who just faded into the background, saying, "And?"

My friends, the Good News of Jesus' Resurrection from the dead for our salvation means that God is inviting us to genuine faith and real belief in His Son. And since Jesus is alive and is a person, He desires to have personal relationship with us – not simply as some idea or theological construct. It's by this type of personal relationship that the Lord Jesus truly becomes *Our* Lord and the Lord of our lives. And so long after we change out of our Easter clothes, may we still find ourselves being changed by our Lord Jesus Christ. God bless you.