

On this Easter Day, the whole church on earth hears the good news, “Christ is risen,” and we respond, “He is risen indeed! Alleluia!” First comes God’s word to us: “Christ is risen.” That’s what the angel said to the women at the tomb. “I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here, for He has risen, as He said.” This great fact of the resurrection is stated in such simple yet profound words. The reality of the resurrection itself is the first thing that grabs our attention. Jesus really did die, He was buried, and He lay in the tomb since Friday. Now on Sunday morning He is alive, risen from the dead! The unjust humanity could not stop God the Father to grant Him victory over death. As Easter people, the risen Lord is with us to take us through life as it unfolds. We are all invited to roll back the stone doors and come out of the tomb of anything that is blocking us to be God’s children.

Jesus appeared to different people following His resurrection. What do we learn from these appearances? It is Jesus as the gardener takes the first initiative to meet Mary Magdalene who was searching for Him, wanting to be with Him. Jesus calls her by her name, ‘Mary’, and in that instant, she recognizes Him. Jesus as a fellow traveler takes the first initiative to walk with two disciples on the way to Emmaus who are discouraged and dejected. He explains the scriptures to them and they recognize Him in breaking of the bread. And there are many other examples of Jesus’ appearances following His resurrection where we learn that Jesus takes the first initiative and bestows on his disciples what they needed at the time.

The same Jesus appears to us several times every day in different ways. We are preoccupied and caught up in our own self that we miss to see Jesus in sick persons, homeless and needy neighbors, etc. St. Francis of Assisi recognized Him in everyone and everything, calling them his brothers and sisters. He truly lived as Easter Saint upholding every creature of their God given dignity. The Easter of St. Francis reminds us that every day is an opportunity to start fresh, to renew our response to the call of the Lord. He sends us forth as brothers and sisters to the whole world, to bear witness to Him in word and deed, so as to draw everyone to the love of God (cf. Prayer Inspired by the Our Father 5, FF 270). St. Francis of Assisi shows what can happen when the grace of Easter becomes effective in a Christian’s life. He teaches us that every earthly suffering holds the seed of resurrection. For St. Francis, Easter was a vibrant reality that gave light and hope and even energy for his daily journey with Christ to the Father. He teaches us that the real saints (the Easter saints) are quite human, quite natural people in whom, through the Easter purification and transformation, what is human appears afresh in its total originality and beauty (Pope Benedict XVI).

Today our world is going through war and violence to a peak that humanity has never seen. Once again, this year Easter will come and go but a question still remains to be answered by each one of us personally, have we risen with Jesus? Unless we rise with Jesus, our world will continue to suffer and Jesus will continue to be crucified. We may not be able to change the world but we can change ourselves, do our part as Easter people, reject sin and live as the children of God.

Happy and Blessed Easter to you...Peace and all good!      Br Manoj Xalxo, OFM