

THE RESURRECTION

References:

El-Keraza,

Notes For Servants:

- 1.
- 2.

Objectives:

General:

Specific:

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- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Instructions:

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Bible Verse:

“Be not affrighted: Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: he is risen; he is not here: behold the place where they laid him.”

(Mark 16:6)

Lesson:

See Attached Sheets.

THE RESURRECTION

A) The Witnesses

The accounts of the Resurrection which the four evangelists give us were written in the second part of the first century, that is between the years 50 and 100 A. D. Thus they are the work of the same generation which had witnessed the event, the generation of the apostles and their immediate followers. They bear witness to the beliefs held by the Christian community at Jerusalem from the very beginning of its existence.

The spirit in which the Gospels were written is well illustrated by Luke himself, who in his prologue writes, "Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things which have been accomplished among us, just as they were delivered to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word, it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you" (Lk 1:1-3).

Like all sincere and authentic witnesses, the evangelists and St Paul give us accounts of the Resurrection which confirm each other but still differ in a number of details. Each one has a personal point of view. Each one, inspired by the Holy Spirit, wants to emphasize this or that aspect, some particular point which impressed him the most. Furthermore, it is very difficult to reconstruct events in strictly chronological order because this event by its very nature takes place outside the normal—temporal and spatial—framework within which events ordinarily occur. Nevertheless, the main points stand out clearly.

B) The Empty Tomb

At dawn on the day after the Sabbath, that is, the day of rest, some of the women who followed Christ—Mary Magdalene, Mary "the mother of James," Salome, Joanna, and "the other women"—came to Jesus' tomb to bring aromatic spices, that is, perfumes, for the body of the deceased, as was the custom of the Jews.

They saw that the big rock which had blocked the entrance to the tomb had been rolled away and that the tomb was empty. None of them had seen Jesus coming out of the tomb. Only later accounts, not of apostolic origin and therefore not recognized by the Church— they are called apocryphal gospels—describe Jesus coming out of the tomb. The true Gospels, the "canonical Gospels," respect the mystery of the Lord's Resurrection, just as they respect the mystery of His birth. No one knows how the Lord came out of the tomb, just as no one knows how Jesus could have been born of a virgin. We only know that when the women came to the tomb, they found the stone rolled away and the tomb empty. Only several hours later would Jesus show Himself to His disciples.

C) The Announcement of the Resurrection by the Angels

After Peter and John had gone away from the empty tomb, Mary Magdalene came back. The holy women were to be witnesses of an event attested to by all four evangelists. It is these divine messengers who are the first to announce the good news of the Resurrection to the holy women. "You seek Jesus who was crucified He is not here; for He has risen, as He said. Come, see the place where He lay. Then go quickly and tell His disciples that He has risen from the dead, and behold, He is going before you to Galilee; there you will see Him. Lo, I have told you" (Matthew 28:6-7; Mk 16:6-7; Lk 24:5-7).

Thus, from the beginning, the Resurrection appears not as a dazzling visual phenomenon but as a truth announced by word which one must accept and believe. The women believe it. One can just as easily reject and deny it. The disciples did not at first believe the women when, agitated and

frightened, they brought the good news. Our freedom is respected: the Risen One does not force the mind through numerous miracles; rather, He appeals to one's faith.

D) Appearances of the Risen One

The Appearance to Mary Magdalene

The first person to meet the living Christ after His Resurrection was Mary Magdalene. She turned round and saw Jesus standing, and she did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom do you seek?" Supposing Him to be the gardener, she said to Him, "Sir, if you have carried Him away, tell me where you have laid Him, and I will take Him away." Jesus said to her, "Mary." She turned and said to Him in Hebrew, "Rabboni!" (which means Teacher). Jesus said to her, "Do not hold me." (Jn 20:13-17) And in fact she was about to fall down and embrace His feet, as Matthew tells us (28:9). Mary Magdalene did not recognize Jesus by His features but only by His voice, by hearing Him call her name. The meeting in which she recognized Him is a deeply personal one—"Mary," "Rabboni!"—on a much deeper level than mere physical recognition. Jesus returned from another world. He no longer belongs to the world in which one grows old and dies. He is already part of an eternal world. He returns into this world in such an unheard-of way that only those who had loved and believed in Him could recognize Him in a personal relationship full of love and faith. That is why, several hours after Mary Magdalene sees Him, two other disciples would not be able to recognize Him at first sight. Only Saint Luke gives a detailed account of the second appearance of the Lord Jesus, although Mark (16:12) briefly alludes to it.

Conclusion:

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- 3.