

THE GLORY OF EASTER: EASTER VIGIL

MARK 16:1-7

Alleluia. The stone is rolled away!

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ, Alleluia. Blessed Easter and happy Easter to all God's children as we celebrate the Holy night of our salvation. I'm grateful to celebrate for the first time this sacred night with you. I would like to greet those who are connected with us and who are watching online and all our visitors, Alleluia. I greet those who are going to come to full communion with the Holy Catholic Church tonight. Alleluia. Those who are going to be baptized and confirmed, then receive the first Holy Communion with the song of Easter, alleluia. To the children and the youth, we greet you with the great song of Easter, Halleluiah... It is a great joy to the whole Church and us, tonight to celebrate our God's story of infinite love for us. We celebrate tonight the victory of love over hatred; victory of life over and light over the darkness.

After all the long readings of tonight, the bottom line is that, in spite of the chaos, and the disobedience of man, God does not give up on us; He does

not abandon us. He redeems, restores, and makes whole whatever is broken in us. We celebrate God's persistent love for us. It is the God who rolls away the stones.

Rolling away the stone!

As a true man, Jesus truly died.

“Jesus uttered a loud cry and breathed his last” (Mark 15:37)

and he was buried in a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid (John 41-42). Jesus' death was real and he was indeed buried as the custom of that time, they rolled a stone of 4000 pounds at the entrance of his tomb which was sealed with the Roman imperial seals of the procurator himself. We understand now that for the Pharisees and the chief priests, the stones were not only part of the ritual, they wanted to be sure that Jesus would remain there in the tomb. Henceforth, besides the stones they also added 30 of their best Roman guards (Mt. 27:65) to prevent Jesus from coming out of the tomb. They wanted him to remain dead even though they knew, He prophesied

that on the third day, he will rise again. There are things that you may want to die. There are situations that keep you captive or in bondage. With Christ, your stone has been rolled away! But Jesus is absent!

Jesus is absent!

Brothers and sisters, the discovery of the physical absence of Jesus in the tomb (Empty tomb) (Luke 24:1-9) is proof that Jesus' resurrection is a historical reality. The women Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Salome while they were on their way to anoint the body of Jesus, found that the large stone was rolled away. Jesus was absent from the tomb but they only saw a young man, dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, a sign that Jesus had conquered death. Jesus is no more to be found in the tomb. The one Alive is no more among the death. No stone, no guard, no power, no amount of darkness of the tomb, no hatred of his enemies, could stop him.

Who will roll the stones of my life?

The women in the Gospel were asking the same question, but the answer was just before their eyes. "It is God", All-powerful and Almighty. He rolls the stone so that the light of Christ may come into our existence and be our life and guide.

Paul understands this when exclaims:

**"Where, O death, is your victory?
Where, O death, is your sting? The**

sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

(1 Cor. 15:55-57).

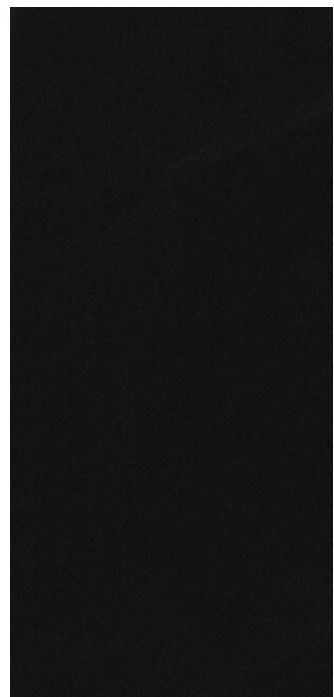
Death is swallowed in Christ's victory

With the resurrection of Christ, our deaths have been swallowed into Christ victory. The power of this world has been defeated (John 16:33) the stones of discouragement and hopelessness have been defeated by the Savior. No addiction, no oppression, no disease, and no sickness shall threaten us anymore. Satan and his angels are now under Christ's dominion. They may attack you, but he will not overcome you. The early morning is indeed a sign of a new day; of a new beginning, where every stone that has been put in your way, has been taken away! This night is the mark of the dawning of a new life in our families, in our parishes, and our world!

Dear brothers and sisters, Jesus is coming out of the tomb for you and for our world, let's not block his way. But let's go out and meet him; he is our life, our light. Do not be afraid, he is the Rock of our salvation and no rock can block his coming; no rock can block God's plan for humanity!

Happy Easter, Christ is risen,
Alleluia!

Fr. Georges Roger BIDZOGO sac.



THE GLORY OF EASTER: CLOTHED WITH GOD'S POWER AND GLORY

ACTS 10:34 A, 37-43; PS. 117; COL. 3:1-4; JOHN 20:1-9

**Christ is risen, alleluia, alleluia!
We celebrate today the day of
the resurrection of Christ!**

Christ is alive! His victory over death is our victory too! How can we understand this?

On Holy Thursday, the Lord removed his outer garment (John 13:1-5) On Good Friday, the Lord was stripped of his garment (Mt. 27:34-35). On Sunday morning, they did not find the body of the Lord in the tomb (Luke 24:3). The linen was nicely folded and the burial cloth, or the napkin or the handkerchief (John 20:7) was folded and separate from the rest of his grave clothes. This certainly suggests to us that the person who was dead on Friday afternoon is alive and he will return. What can we understand about this symbolism of the removing and stripping of the grave clothes, and the folding of

the napkin? The Gospel of John tells us that, The Apostles Peter and John and entered the tomb, saw all this and they believed.

**Symbolism of the linen as a
clue to understand the
resurrection**

The risen Lord leaving his burial linen and even his face-cloth folded separate from other burial clothes could suggest at least three meanings.

**The Risen Lord is the Eternal
who perfectly stones our sins**

Centuries earlier in the Old Testament, only the high priest entered the temple, the Holy of Holies once a year to offer sacrifice in atonement for the sins of the people. (Hebrews 9:7) After the blood is poured, there is a belief that the atonement is completed. Then the priest removes his outer garment inside the temple or inside the holy of

Holies. So when the risen Lord removed the burial clothes and the napkin that covered his face, he made the tomb the new temple; he made himself, the Eternal Priest, therefore, we need not offer anything else for the atonement of our sins; it has been completed. The sign of the completeness of this atonement is that, the Lord, our eternal priest, leaves behind him, all the burial clothes. The declaration: It is finished on Good Friday only refers to the completion of the Lord's obedience to his Father, but the completeness and perfection of our salvation is the resurrection of Christ. Christ's resurrection is for my salvation!

The Linen as an evidence of the resurrection as opposed to the allegation of the stolen body

According to the Gospel of Matthew 28:12-15, the elders having received the reports of the soldiers, they concocted a lie with them

“You must say that Jesus' body was stolen by his disciples while we were asleep”.

The folded linen, and the folded face-cloth separated from other clothes are signs that the body was not stolen. The one who used the linen folded them peacefully,

calmly, with confidence because he was not in a hurry. He was now living in a timeless time. He was now living eternally. Through his resurrection, you too live eternally and timelessly!

Christ now clothed with glory and power not clothes sewn by human hands

The perfection of the atonement is perfectly completed and there is no proof of the stolen body which stands. Christ is no longer going to need clothes made by human hands, he is now clothed with the glory and the power of God. He will not be naked anymore; he will not be stripped anymore. No one can strip us from the glory of God.

Yes, the resurrection is our last stage when the Lord will finalize the atonement of each and every one of our sins. Then we too will be clothed not by any human attire, not by any money, but by God himself; we will be clothed by his love and by his mercy. So my final question to you, is what are you wearing now? Is it simply clothes made by human hands? It is time to ask God to clothe you with his power and glory as he did to Jesus.

Happy Easter!

Fr. Georges Roger BIDZOGO sac.

