

2020 Easter Vigil – P. Abbot John Braganza, osb

1. **In the deep darkness of this Easter night, a night “ablaze with light from her eternal King,” the “unshadowed light” pours into us from the power and glory of Christ’s resurrection (*Exultet*)!** Yet, it is still dark outside. Are praises of the *Exultet* welling up from the Church’s faith just poetical exaggerations? **They are not, of course!** Rather, they express the crossing of a boundary that even the natural rhythm of night and day cannot contain because the natural order has been surpassed forever! These words express an apocalyptic event, the unveiling of secrets about heaven and earth, about past, present and future: **“This night shall be as bright as day, dazzling is the night for me, and full of gladness.”**

2. **St. Matthew begins his account with the women hurrying to the tomb with spices when there is a violent earthquake.** The earth trembles, it is shaken up. We lose our balance, the soldiers fall to the ground. This is the world today, shaken up in fear, off balance, because it depends upon its own strength to beat the coronavirus. **The Risen Christ calls us to become unbalanced by God and take up a new balance that corresponds to the divine life in us. New wine, fresh skins!**

3. **The angel that the women see is the first to witness to the glory of the resurrection.** He reveals his glory to the women who are blinded by it and astonished by his power: he rolls back the stone and sits on it. **But the soldiers are stunned into morbidity. Unbelief is like that.** Angels appear when God wishes to announce something great, as they did at the annunciation, as they will at his ascension. They will accompany him when he comes again, clothed in the glory of his Father. **This time the angel announces Christ’s apocalyptic victory over death by sitting on the stone.**

4. **The angel speaks to the women:** “Do not be afraid! I know you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here he is risen, as he said. Come and see the place where he lay, then go quickly and tell this disciples.” (Mt 28:5-7) He announces to them another broken boundary. Death cannot chain our humanity down anymore. The women peer into the dark empty tomb, their historical testimony to the resurrection. **It’s not their imagination; it happened.** For us, this message proclaimed in the Church for two thousand years can become blunted. But it is no less true. It doesn’t matter how we die, whether by the virus or naturally, this flesh will rise again in Christ. **Our tombs will be empty one day! Cemeteries are temporary dormitories! That’s the point: empty tombs everywhere!**

5. **The stone is rolled back.** The boundaries of life constrain us. Our fears entomb us. Our lack of love and charity constrains us. Our poor health and habitual faults imprison us. **All these can be like a stone impossible to roll away.** But none of these is a limitation to the risen Christ. None of these will prevent him from making us great saints if we allow him to roll back our stones of death and limitation. **But we need faith and the response of the women.**

6. **“Filled with awe and great joy, the women came quickly away from the tomb and ran to tell the disciples.”** (Mt 28:8) The effect of resurrection on you is that you have to tell it to everybody! **But Jesus wants to be part of the historical testimony.** He meets them. He greets them! They recognize his voice; they see his transfigured face; they grab his feet! He is real! Suddenly their natural boundaries of time and space and sight are shattered: **God communicates himself in what they have seen and touched and heard!** Henceforth, his divine power will touch all created things in a new way. The disciple must struggle henceforth to go beyond the merely tangible, audible, visual, and emotional to a perception of

faith that sees Christ behind every event and person encountered, behind each moment of time. Every moment of time becomes precious! Every person becomes precious! Every event becomes an opportunity to encounter him. **He wants to be part of your life's testimony.**

7. He leaves the women a message, a little different from that of the angel: "...go and tell my brothers that they must leave for Galilee; there they will see me." (Mt 28:10) Notice that he says "brothers", not "disciples" as the angel did. **After the resurrection everyone has become my brother and everyone must hear the Good News**, especially the Galilee of the nations! This apocalyptic event unveils secrets about heaven and earth, about past, present and future: all creation is destined live in God without the decay and fear and insecurity, injustice and alienation we see around us today. The whole human family is destined to share in the gift of the resurrection of the body as brothers and sisters. **His life intimately pulsing in them! This life begins in us when we receive the Easter sacraments!**

"This night shall be as bright as day, dazzling is the night for me, and full of gladness." **This is our apocalypse, our Easter! Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!**