

RAISE
A
HALLE
LUJAH

WEEK ONE

EASTER
PACKAGE

RAISE A HALLE LUJAH DAY AE DPE NS UN SO SG

[19 April 2020] Sunday Gospel - John 20:19-31

In the evening of that same day, the first day of the week, the doors were closed in the room where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews. Jesus came and stood among them. He said to them, 'Peace be with you', and showed them his hands and his side. The disciples were filled with joy when they saw the Lord, and he said to them again, 'Peace be with you. 'As the Father sent me, so am I sending you.' After saying this he breathed on them and said: 'Receive the Holy Spirit. For those whose sins you forgive, they are forgiven; for those whose sins you retain, they are retained.'

Thomas, called the Twin, who was one of the Twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. When the disciples said, 'We have seen the Lord', he answered, 'Unless I see the holes that the nails made in his hands and can put my finger into the holes they made, and unless I can put my hand into his side, I refuse to believe.' Eight days later the disciples were in the house again and Thomas was with them. The doors were closed, but Jesus came in and stood among them. 'Peace be with you' he said. Then he spoke to Thomas, 'Put your finger here; look, here are my hands. Give me your hand; put it into my side. Doubt no longer but believe.' Thomas replied, 'My Lord and my God!' Jesus said to him: 'You believe because you can see me. Happy are those who have not seen and yet believe.'

There were many other signs that Jesus worked and the disciples saw, but they are not recorded in this book. These are recorded so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing this you may have life through his name.

RAISE A HALLE LUJAH REFLECTION

Introduction

Hey friends! Here's an imaginative reflection of the Gospel passage for Easter Sunday (Jn 20:1-9). Immerse yourself into the drama of the first Easter morning. Allow the Holy Spirit to guide you as you read and reflect, and take time to listen to what God wants to speak to you.

It's early Sunday morning. The town is quiet and everyone's still asleep... but not Mary Magdalene. She's lying in bed, staring at the ceiling. She hasn't been able to sleep well since Friday. Everytime she closes her eyes, all she sees is his battered and lifeless body hanging from that cross. She's tired from the lack of sleep but she decides that she'll go to his resting place to pay her respects. Maybe she'll find some much needed comfort and closure there.

She lights her lamp, gathers her ointments and trudges along. As she walks, the horrific scenes of Golgotha continue to fill her mind but she tries her best to think of better memories. She can't believe the same Jesus that banished seven demons from her is now dead. She stops to collect herself as a certain emptiness overcomes her and tears begin to roll down her face.

After a longer than expected walk, Mary arrives at the tomb. But something doesn't seem right. The stone, it's rolled away. What's the meaning of this? Could it be grave robbers? Fear grips Mary and instinctively, she darts back to the town, to the first two people she can think of.

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REFLECTION

Knocking hurriedly on their door, Mary shouts, “Peter! John! Wake up!” The pair are shocked out of bed by the commotion. From outside their hut they hear Mary saying “Someone has taken his body away!” Immediately, the two jump out of bed, put on their tunics and race towards the tomb. By now, the sun is already beginning to rise. John reaches first but stops outside to catch his breath. Peter reaches soon after but wastes no time, running straight into the tomb.

Peter inspects the tomb. Besides two pieces of cloth laying on the floor, the place is completely empty. He’s angry and can’t believe someone would do this. “He’s already dead! What more do they want with him?”, Peter exclaims. John enters the tomb and sees Peter pacing up and down furiously. He sees the two cloths folded neatly at the corner of the tomb and he thinks aloud “If they were trying to steal him, why would they take time to fold the cloth nicely?” Just then, something clicks in Peter. His eyes widen with hope and looking at John he says, “Don’t you remember what the Master said? John... He’s... alive. Jesus is alive!”

As I meditated on this Gospel passage, I found myself identifying a lot with the character of Mary Magdalene. The cruel and inhumane execution of Jesus would have definitely shaken Mary to her core. I imagine she would’ve gone about her daily routines lifelessly for the past few days. She must’ve felt all hope and joy robbed from her. I imagined Mary, in her own way, feeling wrapped in cloths and stuck in the darkness of the tomb.

RAISE A HALLE LUJAH REFLECTION

At times in my life, I too feel like Mary; wrapped and trapped in my worries of the future, brokenness and insecurities. “What if?” is the question that looms in my mind. What if this course of study is not for me? What if I go back to my old ways? What if I am not good enough? These thoughts preoccupy my mind and leave me feeling discouraged, disappointed and unwilling to try. In the comfort of my tomb, I throw little pity parties to feel better about myself. Perhaps for Mary, the sight of a closed tomb would’ve been comfortable too. Even though she would’ve had to rack her brain over how to open it alone to anoint Jesus, at least she would’ve known Jesus was safe inside. She would’ve had the closure she had come for.

Yes, often we feel like there’s no other way to live than resigned in our darkness. But the great message for us today is that **THERE IS HOPE**, hope for more. “The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.” (John 1:5) The tomb is not the end for us because Jesus is victorious over death. **HE HAS RESURRECTED!** And he wants to resurrect you too! Today, Jesus invites you to arise; to shed the cloths that are keeping you bound in the darkness of your tombs and to step out into grace. This Easter, let us be bold in saying yes to Jesus, yes to the new life of possibilities that He is offering to us. Just like Mary, the open tomb may not be a familiar sight for us. We may not be entirely sure about what this new life with Christ entails. But let us continue to trust in the faithfulness of our God and to claim the truth that he will always be with us. Jesus Christ is alive and so are you! Alleluia, alleluia!

Matthew Christee, 24

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REFLECTIONS QUESTIONS

- 1) In what areas of my life have I resigned myself to feeling dead and stuck in the tomb?
- 2) How is Jesus inviting me to arise and step out of my tomb?
- 3) What is one grace that I need in order to respond to Jesus?

RAISE A HALLE LUJAH PRAYER WEEK OF THE

Prayer for Resurrection (adapted from Heather C. King)

Lord, I know you have the power over life and death.
I give you the dead in me:

The worries,
the hopelessness,
the inadequacies,
the shame and guilt,
the faith frayed and worn thin,
the relationships shattered and broken.
You make all things new.
Resurrect my faith,
renew my joy.
restore my hope.
You, conqueror of death, can do all things.
I trust in you.

Amen.

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CHALLENGE

Taking a Concrete Step to Respond

Know someone who's been feeling hopeless, helpless, estranged from God?

Download an E-aster postcard from our OYP website, share with them the message you have received in your own reflection, and send them your own message of encouragement too!