**THE EASTER EXPERIENCE**

In John’s Gospel on Easter Sunday (Jn 20:1-9), Jesus is not mentioned. His dead body is no longer in the tomb, but nobody has seen him risen yet.

There is an empty tomb and the burial cloths that the body of Jesus had been wrapped in. John places this episode between the death of Jesus and the meetings of the Risen One withMary of Magdala and his disciples.

Before meeting the Risen One, the disciples discover this tomb and these burial cloths. The empty tomb and the cloths were enoughfor the beloved disciple to believe: "he saw and believed" (Jn 20:8).

What does this mean? Perhaps we are given a clue by the verb “to wrap.” We find it first earlier in the Gospel (Jn 11:44) when Lazarus came out of his tomb, "tied hand and foot with burial bands, and his face was wrappedin a cloth."

Lazarus had been wrapped up by death, and now he emerges with the signs of death that had bound him to it. Jesus releases him from death with words of liberation and life: "Untie himand let him go" (Jn 11, 44).

Before today’s gospel (Jn 19), Jesus himself is wrapped in a cloth, as Lazarus had been. We read that "They took the body of Jesus and bound it with burial cloths, along with the spices" (Jn 19:40). The body of Jesus is bound by death, like the body of every dead man.

In today’s Gospel, Peter, who has entered the tomb, sees the cloth that had covered the head of Jesus, "rolled up in a separate place" (Jn 20:7). It is no longer wrapped around the head of the Lord, but it is rolled up.

This can mean at least two things:

- The first is that Jesus has entered death, he has been bound by it but death no longer has power over him. Jesus defeated death. Jesus is free from death.

- The second is that the Passion of Jesus has destroyed death. Such is the power of the life that the Lord has released with his Resurrection.

Death no longer binds the body of Jesus, and it no longer binds our body. It is no longer the master of our life. We read in the Easter Vigil from the letter to the Romans that "if then we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him. We know that Christ, raised from the dead, dies no more: death no longer has power over him" (Romans 6: 8-9).

The Greek verb that we translate as "no longer has power" is the verbthat “Lord” comes from. Death is no longer the lord, the master of man's life. From this moment, only Christ has the name of Lord (Philippians 2:11). Nobody else, not even death, is the master of life.

So this is what the disciples see, this is why theybelieve. They see burial cloths that are nolonger of any use, and they see a tomb that no longer holds anyone.

Before seeing the Risen One, the disciples experience the defeat of death. Then they believe, because until then they had notunderstood the Scriptures (Jn 20: 9). So, the Scriptures can lead us as far as theempty tomb, but then, to understand them, we have to go in, and wemust have the experience that we are alive, that real life is born from this empty tomb.

The gospel finishes with a verse (Jn 2:10) that we do not read today. It says: "Then the disciples returned home."

They return home because there is nothing else to do there: If the body had still been there, they could have stayed there to honour it. If they had thought that the body had been stolen, they would have started to look for it, as Mary of Magdala did. No, they have seen and they have believed and so they return home. There they meet the Lord.

All this is our Christian experience. We meet the Risen One when we have the experience of a death that has been defeated in us, thanks to his death. The experience of evil, of grief, is something that remains in life, but it no longer has the strength to wrap us up, to bind us, to possess us. So we remain in hope, and we can go home, as John and Peter did. Our faith in the Word of God and the sacraments gives us access to the power of life that has been released from this empty tomb.

Let us joyfully accept the gift of Easter and take up the task of living this experience, and help others to do the same.

*Adapted from an unknown author.*