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Fr. Benedict Groeschel writes of Easter Morning that, *we are so familiar with the accounts of the Resurrection that it is difficult for us to capture any sense of the total astonishment of the first witnesses. To begin with, there are no adequate words to describe what had never occurred before to human beings. Again, we are plunged into the deepest mystery. We can understand the words, but we cannot totally fathom their inner meaning.* The mystery of the first Easter Sunday, the astonishment, the fear and trembling of the three myrrh-bearing women are what we encounter in this morning's Gospel. The news of the Resurrection is so overwhelming and unexpected that the women flee the tomb and do not say anything about it to anyone. Yet among our Easter decorations and dinners the astonishment, the fear and trembling of the first eyewitnesses of the empty tomb are easily forgotten.

Over the past few days these poor women and the disciples have suffered a terrible shock. Their gentle and kind Jesus was arrested, tortured, and executed by crucifixion – to the ancient world, the most painful death imaginable. They were grateful to be allowed to bury their Lord, as this was not always the case with those crucified. Perhaps any memory of the Lord's prophecy of a Resurrection was the furthest from their minds. Their loss was great and terrible, so shocking that the disciples and others hide for *fear of the Jews*, and what they might also do to them. Theirs was a grief mixed with fear. Yet they lovingly come to finish their duty which is to give Jesus a proper burial. Imagine also the surprise and fear of this strange young man in a long white garment telling them to not be afraid, that Jesus *is risen, He is not here.*

We read further in the Gospel of St. Mark that Jesus appears to Mary Magdalene and she goes and tells the other disciples as they mourned and wept, but when they heard that Jesus was alive, they would not believe. It may be surprising though to hear that Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome, and the disciples, who have all been mentioned with Jesus before in the Gospels, are astonished at the Resurrection. Surely, they had heard Jesus say before that He would die and be raised to life again. Jesus had prophesied of death and Resurrection often. But these devoted women come to the tomb after having bought spices to anoint the body of Jesus with. We remember that Jesus had been laid to rest the eve before the Sabbath and the Passover, the Gospels mention that one hundred pounds worth of ointment had been brought to the tomb for Jesus' burial. But these three women are coming again to the tomb, implying that it must have been a rushed burial, and they came to the tomb to finish the embalming, and found it empty.

The death of Jesus was too awful for them to imagine. The trauma and cruelty of His death was so great that belief in the Resurrection, even among His own disciples and closest friends, is gradual. We see this in the three myrrh bearing women, they find the empty tomb and are so afraid by the sight that they fled for fear. Mary Magdalene comes back to the empty tombs and weeps, mistaking the risen Lord for a gardener, and begging Him where they have taken the body of her Lord. Only after the Lord reveals Himself to her does she believe. Later on, this morning, Peter and John run to

see the empty tomb for themselves, but Peter goes home wondering what had happened. Later this week we find them still hiding and saddened together when our Lord appears to them. On the road to Emmaus, Our Lord must reveal Himself to disciples, the disciples recount how Jesus was a great prophet in power and deed, how he was crucified, and yet they marvel at how the others came to the tomb and found it empty.

With all the excitement today, it is easy to overlook this general astonishment of the disciples and close friends of Jesus that first Easter morning. But this helps to prove the mystery of the Resurrection. It was bigger and greater than they could even imagine, the Resurrection of Christ is not just a spiritual resurrection, but a resurrection of glorified flesh and bone. Later this week He proves to doubting Thomas that He is not just a ghost or a spirit, but flesh and bone. For the first time ever, a human body is not just raised from the dead but is united in glory to the Word of God and will never see death again. Doubting Thomas said he would not believe the Lord had risen from the dead until he placed his fingers in the nail prints and thrust his hand in his side. And to Thomas the Lord appears and says *handle me and see, a ghost hath not flesh and blood as I have.*

This is the Good News of the Gospel, and while it is good news, yet is it also awesome and frightful. May we take our time today and this week, to pray, to give thanks, to adore the risen Christ, alive with His divinity but above all in His humanity, in His Body and Blood in the Eucharist. Christ is Risen, truly He has risen. Alleluia. Alleluia.