Our Sunday Readings

The Earthshaking Story

EXODUS 12:1-8, 11-14

1. Imagine that you’re an Israelite enslaved in Egypt.
   a. What has your life been like in Egypt?
   b. How do you feel as you gather with your family to eat?
   c. Who is with you?
   d. How are the others acting?
   e. Who puts the blood onto the doorposts of your house?
   f. What do you say and/or do during the meal?
   g. What do you ask of God?
   h. How do you feel as the meal comes to an end?
   i. How do you think your life will change after tonight?
   j. What do you and your family members do once the meal has ended?

2. What in this passage most stands out to you?

3. How will you keep vigil during the final days of Holy Week?

This day shall be a memorial feast for you, which all your generations shall celebrate...

EXODUS 12:1-8, 11-14

Stepping into the story

When Jews celebrate Passover, they thank and praise God for freeing their ancestors from Egypt, making a covenant with them in the Sinai desert, and leading them to a land of their own. However, the meal is more than a look back.

Jews believe that ritual is a way to become part of the story of salvation. By ritually remembering the past, each new generation enters into that past, thereby becoming part of God’s promises for the future. For example, when the Jews who were under Roman occupation gathered for Passover, their ritual remembering became a prayer for God to free them from Rome just as God freed their ancestors from Egypt.

Eucharist

Since the first Christians were Jews, they understood that their rituals brought them into the story of salvation, but this time the story was Christ. When Christians gathered for eucharist, they looked back at the sacrificial life of Christ and prayed for God to transform and unite them into Christ’s body – as we still do today.
**MATTHEW 28:1-10**

_The shaking continues_

When Jesus was crucified the earth shook (27:51). Now it shakes again. This dramatic sign indicates that the death and resurrection of Jesus is a single, inseparable event that impacts all of creation. Now that God has raised Jesus from the dead, all people and all creation can look forward to liberation from sin, suffering, and death.

**Disputing false claims**

The empty tomb doesn’t prove that God raised Jesus. Some people claim it was the wrong tomb or Jesus’ disciples stole the body. Matthew refutes both claims.

- Mary Magdalene and Mary, the mother of James and Joseph, saw the tomb in which Jesus was placed (27:61)
- Jewish leaders asked for soldiers to guard the tomb (27:62f); these are the same guards who faint dead away when the angel arrives (28:4)

The angel explains what truly happened.

**Triumphant messenger**

The angel comes down from the sky, easily rolls back the cover to Jesus’ tomb, and then sits on it as if to say, “God has conquered death.” The guards pass out, so they can’t hear the angel’s words of reassurance: _Do not be afraid!_ Now that God has triumphed over death, the woman have no need to fear. They are followers of Jesus, so they will come to share in eternal life just as Jesus does.

**Moving quickly**

The women aren’t permitted to stand around and rejoice. Instead they’re told to hurry and share the good news with the disciples. While on their way they meet the risen Jesus, but he doesn’t let them delay, either. Now that a new era has come about, the work of bringing others to Jesus must begin (28:19). Although they abandoned him, Jesus forgives his male followers: he calls them _my brothers_ (v.10).

**The risen Jesus**

No one saw Jesus’ resurrection. Rather, our New Testament contains stories in which people see the risen Jesus. Here the women lovingly embrace his feet, which shows that Jesus isn’t a ghost. They also worship him, which is the response every person should have to the one who has opened the way to eternal life.

**PRAYER**

adapted from the Opening Prayer for Easter Sunday

_O God,_

through your only begotten Son

you conquered death

and unlocked for us the path to eternity.

Grant that we who keep the solemnity of the Lord’s resurrection may,

through the renewal brought by your Spirit,

rise up in the light of life.

We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ,

your Son, who lives and reigns with you

in the unity of the Holy Spirit,

one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

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**MATTHEW 28:1-10**

1. Imagine that you’ve gone to Jesus’ tomb.
   a. Why are you going to the tomb?
   b. What are you feeling?
   c. How do the guards react to your arrival?
   d. Do you speak to the guards?
   e. How do you react to the earthquake?
   f. What does the angel look like?
   g. How do you react to the angel?
   h. How do the guards react to the angel?
   i. Why are you _fearful yet overjoyed_ at hearing the angel’s announcement (v.8)?
   j. How long is it before you meet the risen Jesus?
   k. What does Jesus look like?
   l. How do you react when you see Jesus?
   m. What do you feel?
   n. What exactly do you do after Jesus sends you to the male disciples?

2. How has Jesus shaken your own life?
3. How do you still need to be shaken up?

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_Ignorance of Scripture is Ignorance of Christ_ –ST. JEROME