Stations of the Resurrection

By Columban Fr. Finbar Maxwell
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Prelude

Unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains only a single grain; but if it dies, it yields a rich harvest. Jn 12: 24

Jesus is taken down from the cross and held by those who love Him, including His mother, Mary of Magdala, John the beloved disciple and other men and women who were close to Him. Numb with shock and grief, His friends wrap His broken body in linen cloths and lay Him in a tomb. With darkness approaching and Sabbath nearing, they roll a stone across the entrance of the tomb. Guards keep watch lest anyone come to steal the body away.

We are told, Lord, that You descended into hell, to free those souls waiting there. Even after Your death Your work of redemption was still taking place. In the liminal space of that Friday and Saturday, while Your mother and companions grieved, some mysterious process was underway. On that Sabbath eve, when earth was stilled in mourning, a secret alchemy was taking place known only to heaven, yet waiting to break forth on earth: Resurrection.

Lord, may we be ever grateful
For bringing us from death to life
Into the joy of Your peace and love. ~ Amen.
First Station
Jesus Is Risen

There was a violent earthquake, for the angel of the Lord, descending from heaven, rolled away the stone and sat on it. The guards were so shaken, they were like dead men.
Mt 28: 2

A place of darkness, a damp, sealed tomb, is suddenly filled with light. A mighty earthquake rocks the land. You awaken, Lord, if that is the word, for You were not lost in sleep, but rather in death. Yet death has no power over You; death cannot contain You. Filled with the life of God now boundless in You, and with joy beating through Your veins, You returned suffused with the breath of the Holy Spirit; that Spirit which in baptism descended on You as Beloved, and now flows through You as Risen Lord.

The stone to the tomb has been rolled away, allowing Risen light to pour onto a darkened world. The soldiers, shocked, are blinded in fear. Uncomprehending and lacking belief, some stumble and fall, while others run away, to report with astonishment what has taken place. After the earthquake subsides an animal chorus roars and birds cry out in glory through the skies. The women approach, still wrapped in grief, carrying spices to anoint Your wounds.

Lord, may the stones of life's hardships be rolled away from our lives.

May we allow You to heal our wounds
And in so doing, know the joy of Your peace and love.
~ Amen.
Second Station
The Women Go to the Tomb

When the Sabbath was over, Mary of Magdala, Mary the mother of James, and Salome, brought spices with which to anoint Him. Mk 16: 1

On the Sabbath day after Jesus was placed in the tomb, while the men were locked in fear in their upper room, the women were bound together in their grief. What stories did they tell of their years spent with their Lord? “Remember when...?” they must have said, as memories and miracles were recounted and relived. How their hearts must have burned as they shared; how their spirits must have fallen with the knowledge that He was gone, taken from them in the most brutal and shameful of ways. How lovingly they prepared their spices, even on this Sabbath—which He'd taught them “was made for man.”

When Sabbath was over they went to the tomb; carrying spices in jars to restore dignity to His body after its desecration days before. What confusion up ahead, though, as they walk the path to the tomb. The soldiers are fleeing, the stone is moved, and the tomb is open to the world. On looking inside they see a man seated where Jesus’ body lay. Young and dressed in white, He tells them—as if it could make any sense, “He has risen, He is not here. But you must go and tell His disciples and Peter. He is going before you to Galilee; it is there you will see Him.” Overcome with fear, like the guards they ran away; belief and joy would come in time.

Lord, may we be aware of those around us who are suffering.

May our presence be a balm for their wounds.

May we restore and respect the dignity of others.

~ Amen.
Third Station
Jesus Meets His Mother

At night there are tears, but joy comes with dawn.
Psalm 30: 5

Mary, you lay there in the darkness of that early dawn. Heart broken, clinging to verses of comfort from psalms you remembered and had often prayed. Alone, now that the other women had gone to the tomb, you tried to remember, to put the pieces of His life back together again. You recalled your “Yes” that brought Him into the world; with Joseph by your side—he who intuited the presence of God as much as you experienced Him. And the mysterious words of Simeon, which you now knew foretold this time – “A sword will pierce your own soul too.” You cradled Jesus at the foot of the cross as you did when He was a child. You knew Him more than any other person did and ever could.

Then bruised by your grief and lost in your memories He stands beside you now. His hand on your shoulder, comforting you tenderly, addressing you in the spoken Aramaic of your home: Immah, mother, it is I; do not weep; do not be afraid! He holds you in such steady embrace that you know you are not imagining Him; that you know He is there with you. His presence and His words are a balm to your soul. Magnificat rises in you through your tears, as you sang it joyfully once before. You hold each other long enough to assure you that He is alive, and then He leaves, for now, to meet the others still lost in their tears.

Lord, we thank You for our parents, without whom we would not be here.

We thank You for their sacrifices, the many they have made.

May they know the strength and comfort of Your presence—and of ours. ~ Amen.
Fourth Station  
Jesus Meets Mary of Magdala at the Tomb  

*Jesus said, “Woman, why are you weeping? Who are you looking for?”* Jn 20: 15

Mary, what confusion you felt. The tomb was empty, yet a man who was there—an angel?—told you Jesus had risen from the dead, and instructed you to tell Peter and the others. At first you fled in shock but returned to the tomb, searching for wherever they placed your beloved Lord. You saw the gardener and asked him where Jesus’ body was. This gardener saw your tears and encouraged you to speak: “Woman, why are you crying?” He knew you needed to express your grief, to let it pass through and out of you, before you could comprehend who it was you were talking to. And when you were ready He revealed himself simply by calling your name: “Mary!”

How often you heard Him call your name before. How familiar that voice was. Seeing Him now, you did the most natural thing you could, you clung to Him. You lost Him just days before—and in doing so you lost a part of yourself. You weren’t about to lose Him again. But He told you not to cling—not that He didn’t want you to hold Him, but there was something yet to be done—for Him and for you. If you remained clinging, you would both have been unable to move into the next stage of what was unfolding. He needed to go ahead to Galilee, and ultimately return to His Father, while you needed to tell the others that He was indeed risen, and alive. In time you would learn a new way of holding, knowing and loving Him—joyfully and lightly, in Spirit.

**Lord, You allowed people to express their pain.**

**And listened to them in their need.**

**May we do likewise. ~ Amen.**
Fifth Station
Peter and John Run to the Tomb

Peter set out with the other disciple to go to the tomb... [They] saw the linen clothes on the ground, and also the cloth that had been over His head. Jn 20: 3, 6

Peter and John, how afraid you must both have been, after all that had taken place. John, you stayed at the cross to the end and helped carry Jesus to the tomb. Peter, what an abyss you fell into after His arrest—cutting off the soldier’s ear and, later that evening, denying you even knew your friend and Lord. What confusion then, when Mary from Magdala came hammering on your door, with news that the stone was rolled from the tomb, that the tomb itself was empty, and more startling still, that she had seen the Lord.

Did you argue with Mary first or did you run straight to the tomb? With John running ahead of you—he had youth on his side—what thoughts were running through your head, as your heartbeat quickened in your chest? Did you remember what He had earlier said, “The son of man must suffer but then rise again?” John reached the tomb first, but out of respect allowed you to enter first. Seeing the linen bindings on the ground, what joy and hope must have flowed through you, and through John. What did you both talk about as you went back to your room?

Lord, may we always have the capacity to be surprised, Surprised especially by joy.
May your joy ever be a part of our lives. ~ Amen.
Sixth Station
Jesus Appears to Thomas

Thomas, called the Twin, who was one of the Twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. Jn 20: 24

Where were you, Thomas, while the others were locked for safety in their room? Peter and John had earlier been to the tomb; they had seen it empty, save for the linen lying on the ground. Did you also go to the tomb, to check for yourself what Peter and John had seen? “Unless I see for myself, I refuse to believe.” You are a man of your senses, Thomas; you trust what you see, and you had seen Him long enough to know who He was and that something big was now underway.

Yet, while you were away, He came into the upper room, stood among your companions and offered them His peace. His peace they badly needed, even if they were filled with alarm and fright. You missed His blessing and His breathing the Holy Spirit onto them. You must have sensed their joy after you returned. You missed being part of that, not seeing what—and who—they had seen. But then He came to you! Though you could scarce believe it was true. “Put your finger here, look, here are My hands…Doubt no longer, but believe.” “My Lord and my God,” you replied. You remind us, Thomas, that doubt does not mean lack of faith but a desire to have our faith confirmed.

Lord, may we never be frightened by doubt;
May we see it as the other side of faith—
Simply a time in which we need more clarification,
before we make the leap.
~ Amen.
Seventh Station

Jesus Appears on the Shore of Tiberius

Jesus called out: “Have you caught anything friends?” And when they answered “No,” he said, “Throw the net out to starboard and you’ll find something.” Jn 21: 5-6

Some time had passed in which He did not show Himself again. Worn out with confusion, Peter, you needed to return to what you knew best: fishing! Something to anchor you when little else made any sense. “I’m going fishing,” you said. The others followed—but you caught nothing that night. How humiliating that must have been for you, though you had experienced something similar before, that day when you met Jesus for the first time. “Have you caught anything?” He had said then. Followed by “Let your nets down to the other side.” You obeyed and hauled in a miraculous catch of fish.

And now, dejected, you hear the same call again, from someone on the shore. “Throw the net out to starboard and you’ll find something.” John, the Beloved, knew who it was and said, “It is the Lord!” And you, Peter, impulsive as ever and with almost nothing on, jumped overboard. No care this time whether you walked on the water or swam through it, you made your way towards Him, soon to be called a second time. But breakfast first: bread and fish cooking on the fire. From last supper to first breakfast, you were learning to take and eat, and remember Him in new ways.

Lord, may our failures never hold us back.  
May we see failure as simply one more chance to try.  
May we hear Your voice on the shore, saying,  
“Let your nets down to the other side.”  
~ Amen.
Eighth Station

Do You Love Me, Peter?

“Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these others do?” How strange, Peter, to be called by your old name, the name when you first met Him by the lake shore, when you were cleaning your nets after a fruitless night out fishing. So much had happened since that day when you left your nets to follow Him, the day when you were first called. “Yes, Lord,” you replied now, “You know I love You.” Again Jesus asked if you loved Him, and finally a third time. Each time you replied, with increasing upset, “Yes, Lord, You know I love You.” Three times Jesus asked, three times you replied. To each response Jesus commissioned you to look after His sheep and feed His lambs.

In calling you by your old name, was Jesus reminding you of your first call—and inviting you now anew into your second call? In asking you three times if you loved Him, did Jesus need to be sure of your intent, sure of where you stood—and sure of where He stood with you? Three affirmations to counter three denials, and a reminder that you could always rise above your failures. Your “Yes” was not about yourself, but about your relationship to Him and to the people you would lead. That “Yes” would eventually take you where you would rather not go. You would go there in faith, and emboldened by courage. Until then, though, you would live your mission knowing the joy of the presence of the Lord.

Lord, may love for You and others always be important in our lives.

May we let ourselves be guided by courage,

Knowing that You always call us by name. ~ Amen.
Ninth Station
The Road to Emmaus

Did not our hearts burn within us as He walked with us on the road and explained the Scriptures to us? Lk 24: 32

The rumors were swirling in Jerusalem in the days after Your death, and especially after Your resurrection, the stories shape-shifting with each telling. What were Cleopas and his friend to make of all this? Like others who followed You, they were devastated by Your trial and crucifixion. How could that have happened to the one who was to set them free? And then the astounding news that the tomb was empty—with the women saying You were alive, while the men said they saw nothing of You. No wonder these two men walked their seven-mile pilgrimage that afternoon, back from Jerusalem to Emmaus, their spirits deflated and their hope extinguished.

Then quietly, without intrusion, You walked alongside them. You opened up their grief, allowing them to talk out all that weighed them down, only to redirect their conversation when they were ready to hear. You opened up the Scriptures for them, salvation history, like one long banner unfurled. No wonder their hearts burned within them, and they pleaded with You to stay, as evening was now setting in and darkness approached. At dinner their eyes were opened as You blessed and handed them bread. What absolute joy in that moment of recognition. And then You were gone—where to, we do not know, “don’t cling to me,” You said. But it’s with the two disciples that we remain, and hurry with them, back to Jerusalem, as they seek out Peter—eager to share with him what they, and we, have seen.

Lord, in those times when we feel we walk alone,
May we unburden our hearts to friends
And never doubt Your presence with us on the road.
~ Amen.
Tenth Station  
The Ascension  

_**Know that I am with you always; yes, to the end of time.**_  
Mt 28: 20

After Your resurrection, Lord, time and place no longer seemed to confine You. You come and go now at will, but with a clear sense of purpose and intention: to strengthen and affirm Your companions, before returning to Your Father; before ascending to the One you always called Abba. On the day You were to leave, You assembled Your friends at Bethany, a place high on the Mount of Olives that was special to You: a place of burial and hope of resurrection for generations of Your people. This was also a place where You went to rest, when You visited Your friends Mary, Martha and Lazarus, and where You went after singing psalms with Your disciples, on the night of Your arrest in Gethsemani below.

This was the holy place that You chose to return to Your Father. After calling Your disciples and companions here, many of them fell down before You—though some hesitated, still trying to comprehend. You approached them and spoke, giving them authority to go out to the world in Your name, in union with the Father and the Holy Spirit. Did Peter, James, and John recall an earlier climb with You, when they witnessed with joy Your transfiguration? This joy was surely in them now, and with all assembled on this mountainside, as You commissioned them to baptize, to teach and to live, all that You had given them, knowing that You would be with them, even to the end of time.

_**Lord, to know that You are ever with us**_  
_**gives us joy and hope.**_

_May we be joy and hope for others too, wherever we may be,  
On our “holy mountains” where we come to know You._  
_~ Amen._
Eleventh Station
A Spirit of Flame

Something appeared to them that seemed like tongues of fire; these separated and came to rest on the head of each of them. Acts 2: 3

Lord, after You returned to your Father, Your disciples slowly learned to know You in a new way. No longer present to them in flesh-and-blood, they now came to know You in Spirit. In the space between Ascension and Pentecost they had time to regroup, to remember, to begin their life as community, and to find their way in the world. The coming of Your Holy Spirit set them afire with Your love and with grace in abundance: gifts of wisdom, understanding, clear purpose, courage, endurance, devotion and reverence of You.

In an upper room the eleven, led by Peter, and Your mother and other companions, men and women who had remained faithful to You, had gathered together when they heard what sounded like a powerful wind, more from heaven than of earth. Your Holy Spirit alighted upon them like flames, loosening their tongues to speak Your Word that all might hear and understand. As Your Spirit, Lord, filled them with joy, they became more fully, more wholly themselves, and in each their own way, they proclaimed You to the world.

Lord, may Your Holy Spirit fill our hearts,
Strengthen our faith
And renew the earth. ~ Amen.
Twelfth Station
The Spirit in the World

How does it happen that each of us hears [them] speaking in his own native language? Parthians, Medes and Elamites; people from Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontos and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya round Cyrene; as well as visitors from Rome – Jews and converts to Judaism alike – Cretans and Arabs; we hear them preaching in our own language about the marvels of God. Acts 2: 8 – 11

Lord, after Pentecost and emboldened with courage and faith, Your disciples set out to take Your Word to the world. Peter to Rome, James to Spain, John to Patmos, Simon to Persia, Andrew to Greece and Ukraine, Thomas to India…. Their lives inspired others to carry faith’s flame across time, place, language and culture, with Your Holy Spirit leading, calling and guiding. We thank You for your Spirit in the world; and for the holy, faithful people who have borne witness to you, and to your Kingdom, even when it cost them their lives.

We thank You for the inspiration of St. Columban, and ask Your blessing on Columban missionaries, men and women, past and present, who have continued to proclaim Your Good News in many corners of the world. We thank You our benefactors, whose generosity and sacrifices enables us to be on mission. Lord, may our mission always be Your mission, as we bear witness to Your Word. As we live and work with people on life’s margins and beyond, may we be in solidarity with the poor, build community through dialogue of life and faith, and protect and heal our planet—your creation—which holds and sustains us.

Father, may we know Your peace.
Jesus, may we know Your love.
Holy Spirit, may we know Your joy. ~ Amen.