

“...And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself”

(John 12:32)

☞ Reflection:

“We are an Easter people; Halleluiah is our song.” Reflecting on the words of St. Augustine, Pope John Paul II once said that joy is the keynote of the Christian message; it brings joy to all who open their hearts to it. It is from the tomb of the resurrected Jesus each Christian receives this joy. (c.f. Angelus 30 November 1986)

Resurrection is not just a part of our Christian faith, it is what gives our faith its very meaning and foundation. This faith is the source of true Christian joy - a joy that is reflected in our words, deeds and daily lives only when it is comprehended in the light of the Salvation Mystery of Jesus Christ.

The reflection of this month is the five mysteries that would enable a Christian to make this resurrected joy his/her lifestyle. These mysteries are the lives of five people who we meet as we walk along the way of the cross of Jesus: Veronica, Simon of Cyrene, Mary Magdalene, Simon Peter and Judas Iscariot. A meditation on their lives and making them the 5 wounds of our lives would help us to live in the joy of resurrection.

1. Veronica: Her name means ‘bearer of victory’. ‘Vera’ in the name also denotes ‘true image’. She was not just a passive witness of Jesus’ way to Calvary but her love was passionate and courageous enough to make her come forward and wipe His face with her own veil. Thus Veronica, who even in the midst of chaos and tension made an imprint of His face on her soul is the first mystery to meditate. When we are able to absorb His face, which is unveiled through regular personal prayer and reflecting on the Holy Bible even in the midst of the bustle of our lives, we are on the way to a joyful life of resurrection.

2. Simon of Cyrene: Simon and his place at the way of the cross is recorded in the three Synoptic Gospels. His name denotes ‘hearkening’, ‘attentive’ and ‘listening’. He had Jesus’ cross on his shoulder only because he was paying attention to Jesus with the cross. When we open our hearts and ears to the pain and suffering of our fellow human beings, we too become cross-bearers. And these crosses do not give us pain but pave the way to a joyful life of resurrection, just as Simon’s attentiveness to Jesus led his sons, Rufus and Alexander to become missionaries.

3. Mary Magdalene: She was the fortunate one to witness both the crucifixion and the resurrection of our Lord. She was the first one to be called by her name by the resurrected Christ. She was also the one from whom seven demons charged out and in a way considered doomed by the world, but she was the one blessed to witness the resurrection of Christ. Even the Protestant church praises her as a ‘brave woman of faith’. She had the gift to follow the heart of Jesus. When the disciples abandoned Him, when the world belittled Him, there were a few ladies who followed Him throughout His way of the cross - their hearts along with Mary Magdalene’s are mysteries to us. When we meditate to unveil this mystery like Magdalene, we also become the first witness to the joyful life of resurrection.

4. Simon Peter: Here is the man who followed Jesus ‘at a distance’ with John even after disowning and denying Him; the one who wept throughout in the agony of betraying Him. He also believed that the joy of resurrection “is born anew...through the living and abiding word of God” (1 Pt. 1:23). The desire to embrace confession - the fitting door for repentance, will compose us to meditate on the mystery of Peter.

5. Judas Iscariot: What differentiated Peter from Judas is that Peter gave himself to be used by Jesus whereas Judas used Jesus for his own selfish needs. It was not just for money that Judas betrayed Jesus, he hoped to make Jesus a revolutionary political leader who would overthrow the Roman rule of Palestine. His attempt was futile. Thus Judas also makes himself a mystery on how love-filled deeds with selfish objectives become deadly sins, just as his kiss - a sign of affection became a sign of betrayal.

The Christian joy asks a lot from us: be like Veronica - to imprint and cherish His face in our hearts and souls even in the hustle and bustle of our life; be like Simon - to become attentive and open to bear crosses; be like Magdalene - to be the missionaries of holiness; be like Peter - to be courageous enough to repent and come back to be the witness of Jesus; be not like Judas - to not use Jesus for one’s own self-interest and selfish needs. Let these five people be the five wounds of our resurrected life!

☞ Saints’ Quote:

The Cross had asked the questions; the Resurrection had answered them...The Cross had asked: “Why does God permit evil and sin to nail Justice to a tree?” The Resurrection answered: “That sin, having done its worst, might exhaust itself and this be overcome by Love that is stronger than either sin or death.” (Venerable Fulton J. Sheen)

☑ To Do: Take three days each, to walk with Veronica, Simeon of Cyrene, Peter, Mary Magdalene and Judas Iscariot to the foot of the Cross. They have so many things to teach you: how to gaze at His Cross and His love for you and be drawn to its mysteries, how to meet Him, who rose from the dead to give you the fullness of joy.

