



**Pope at Easter Vigil: ‘With Jesus no tomb will suppress the joy of life’**

At the Vigil Mass in the Holy Night of Easter in St. Peter's Basilica, Pope Francis invites us to “look up” to Jesus, the God of life, and reminds us that by welcoming Him no failure will doom us to despair.

**By Lisa Zengarini**

Pope Francis presided over the traditional Easter Vigil in the Holy Night of Easter in Saint Peter's Basilica on Saturday evening. The celebration started at the entrance of the Basilica with the evocative rite of the blessing of fire followed by the candlelight procession while Lumen Christi was sung and the Basilica lights came on in all their brilliance. The celebration included the baptism and confirmation of eight catechumens from Italy (4), South Korea (2), Japan (1) and Albania (1).

“Who will roll away the stone from the tomb?”

In his homily, Pope Francis reflected on the Gospel account of the women visiting the empty tomb of Jesus, drawing attention to two crucial moments of that event.

At first the grieved women are troubled by a question: “Who will roll away the stone from the tomb?”.

“That stone, an overwhelming obstacle,” said the Pope, “symbolized what the women felt in their hearts.  It represented the end of their hopes, now dashed by the obscure and sorrowful mystery that put an end to their dreams.”

**The tombstones we encounter in our lives**

Sometimes in life, the Pope observed, we too experience this feeling of being overwhelmed  by sorrow and despair: “We encounter these tombstones in the emptiness left by the death of our loved ones, in the failures and fears that hold us back from accomplishing the good we mean to do”, but also “in all the forms of self-absorption that stifle our impulses to generosity and sincere love, in the rubber walls of selfishness and indifference that hold us back in the effort to build more just and humane cities and societies, in all our aspirations for peace that are shattered by cruel hatred and the brutality of war.”

The victory of life over death

Yet, Pope Francis remarked, the same women who bore this darkness in their hearts tell us something quite extraordinary: when they looked up, they saw that that heavy stone had already been rolled back, revealing God’s power: “the victory of life over death, the triumph of light over darkness, the rebirth of hope amid the ruins of failure.”

Let us look up to Jesus, our Pasch

Pope Francis, therefore invited the faithful to “look up” to Him: “If we allow Jesus to take us by the hand,” he said, “no experience of failure or sorrow, however painful, will have the last word on the meaning and destiny of our lives.

*“If we allow ourselves to be raised up by the Risen Lord, no setback, no suffering, no death will be able to halt our progress towards the fullness of life.”*

By welcoming Jesus, “our Pasch”, the “God of life,” into our lives, and saying “yes” to Him, the Pope added, “no stone will block the way to our hearts, no tomb will suppress the joy of life, no failure will doom us to despair.”

“Let us lift our eyes to him, the Risen Lord,” he concluded, “and press forward in the certainty that, against the obscure backdrop of our failed hopes and our deaths, the eternal life that he came to bring is even now present in our midst.”

*“The Man of Sorrows is no longer in prison: he has opened a breach in the wall; he is hastening to meet you. In the darkness, let an unexpected shout of joy resound: He is alive; he is risen!”*



