



# Our Parish Community

April 17, 2022  
Easter (C)  
Acts 10:34a, 37-43  
Col 3:1-4 or 1 Cor 5:6b-8  
Jn 20:1-9 or Lk 24:1-12

## Dear Padre,

**The Church says unless you're baptized, you will not enter heaven. So how was the unbaptized good thief able to enter paradise?**

Jesus was crucified with two thieves. One taunted Jesus, "Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us." The other, rebuking him, said Jesus had done nothing criminal adding, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." Jesus replied to him, saying, "Today you will be with me in Paradise" (Luke 23:39-40, 42-43).

When the good thief rebuked the other, how did he know Jesus had done nothing wrong or that Jesus was going to his kingdom when he died? Scripture provides no background on the good thief to suggest he was baptized, but he's evidently familiar with Jesus' reputation before the crucifixion.

Regardless, even to his dying breath, Jesus desired for all a conversion experience with our compassionate God. God desires salvation for everyone. However, "God has bound salvation to the sacrament of baptism, but he himself is not bound by his sacraments" (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1257). So while the typical way of salvation is through baptism, our merciful God can also give baptismal grace without the sacrament being conferred! For example, when unbaptized infants die, we have "hope that God will save [them] when we have not been able to do for them what we would have wished to do, namely, to baptize them" (2007 Vatican Commission, "The Hope of Salvation for Infants Who Die Without Being Baptized," 103).



WELBIRN/SHUTTER/SHUTTERSTOCK

Fr. Byron Miller, CSsR  
Sundaybulletin@Liguori.org

## I Can't Believe It!

This sentence can mean two very contradictory things. It might express skepticism, similar to: "You've got to be kidding!" It means that what we are asked to accept as fact is just too far-fetched. Or we might marvel at something we think is magnificent, far beyond our expectations. Here it means: "I'm speechless!"

Lest we think that the empty tomb alone is proof of Jesus' resurrection, today's Gospel shows us that even his closest friends had initial problems with the idea. When Mary of Magdala found the tomb empty, she did not immediately conclude Jesus had risen. By itself, an empty tomb proves nothing. She thought his body had been taken. In the first reading, Peter describes how later several of Jesus' followers experienced him alive. This experience certainly changed their thinking. Like Peter, they then went out and proclaimed the truth of the resurrection. However, only those who had the experience were sure.

Neither empty tomb nor someone else's personal experience are by themselves certain evidence of the resurrection. Then what is? We find the beginning of an answer in the even-later writing of Paul. Speaking to the Colossians he says: "For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God" (3:3). In other words, the real proof of the resurrection is the faith of centuries of Christians whose lives have been changed by that faith. In other words, the way you and I live proclaims whether Jesus is alive and well in us.

I can hardly believe it.

Sr. Dianne Bergant, CSA



RACHANA SATHYANARAYAN/SHUTTERSTOCK

[Mary of Magdala] told them, "They have taken the Lord from the tomb, and we don't know where they put him."

JOHN 20:2

### FOR Reflection

- \* We may have to wait for our own resurrection to get insight into the resurrection of Jesus. Pray for a deepened faith.
- \* What might you do to make your own life a stronger witness of Jesus' resurrection?



### A WORD FROM Pope Francis

Jesus' answer does not leave [the good thief] waiting; he speaks of the present. He says, "Today you will be with me in Paradise." In the hour of the cross, the salvation of Christ reaches its height; and his promise to the good thief reveals the fulfillment of his mission: that is, to save sinners.

GENERAL AUDIENCE, SEPTEMBER 28, 2016