

Easter Day

Here are three of the characters of the Gospel, and they are all running. What is the meaning? Mary runs in order to fetch the other two. They run because the news she brings is explosive: *the tomb has been despoiled*.

In the aftermath of any funeral there is an overwhelming sense of emptiness. When the funeral follows on a death which has dishonoured the dead man and all who knew him, as the Cross did, there is a total disorientation. How are you to understand your pain, when his fate tells you, with the authority of High Priest and Pharisee, and scribe and Roman Prefect, that *you should have had nothing to do with him in the first place*? Here is a real sense in which the failed disciples come to receive the weight of the Cross; Holy Saturday is indeed a day of emptiness for them, and we remember the words of Paul about the Cross:

*He emptied himself to assume the condition of a slave, and became what we are;
and being as we are, he was humbler yet, even accepting death on a Cross.*

Their story has come to a violent terminus; their train has smashed into the buffers at the end of the line, and there is no doubt about it: it happened with the veracity of a spear piercing the pericardium of a hanged corpse, and the final dispersal of its bodily fluids. They know, as we know, that dead men do not live again.

Now, however, on the first day of a new week, that paralysed feeling that *his life is ended, there is no more to know, no more to hear from him*, suddenly unfreezes, when the news breaks about the opened tomb. Mary went to find a grave with a dead man in it; she went to experience the numb, dumb darkness of death; and now she has found herself convulsed, and runs back with urgency: the disciples run together, to a grave they had been avoiding, because it appears that there *is* something new to be known: but they have no reason to think that it is other than a last crime against the dead man, a vandal's violation of the tomb.

What is the meaning for us of this race to the grave? It cuts across our own halting, loitering attitude to the mystery of our own faith. It teaches us that men and women have no cause to take their lives - however tragic they may have seemed - as heaviness or servitude. It calls us to rethink the paralysis we accept for ourselves, and to believe in a life that is strenuous and hungry to see...because this one who entered the tomb found his life transfigured: *he saw, and he believed*. You do not need to know a lot to experience this. You do not even need to be awash with holy faith. The only qualification is that you know the fact of death, and you are ready to run towards the tomb rather than sink into a life of paralysis. If you will come, in whatever state, with these first witnesses, you will see the glory of God for which they themselves did not know how to hope.