



SIEBENQUELL

The Wildness of God: The Way of the Holy Springtime VII
Resurrection: the ultimate experience of the wildness of God



SOURCE: UNSPLASH

Beloved sisters and brothers,

I begin my seventh and last reflection of this series »The Wildness of God: The Way of the Holy Springtime« by wishing you all a blessed Easter.

Over the course of the Holy Springtime, we looked at five experiences of Jesus that suffuse our encounters with him with the wildness of God. These were not the exceptions to the rule, but the deep preparation for the experience of the resurrection. The stories of the resurrection reveal to us, that the resurrection is, in fact, the ultimate experience of the wildness of God.

We saw how Jesus enters our spaces, without asking permission or asking whether the time was convenient. The resurrection stories are rife with this moment. He appears behind locked doors, thus entering a private space of fear. He appears on the road to Emmaus, thus entering the space of our flight from disappointment and loss. He appears in a garden of mourning, thus entering the space of our grief and tears.

Secondly, Jesus stakes a claim to our time. On that road to Emmaus, he does not merely appear as a spectator but asks questions and then spends a long time listening to the ensuing stories. Then he deepens the perspectives of the disciples by reflecting on their experience through the prism of Moses and the prophets. All of that demands time of these followers of the Lord. Note, once again, that never once does Jesus ask whether this is convenient. The same happens behind the closed doors and it repeats itself in garden, where he stakes a claim to weeping and sorrowing Mary of Magdala. Not one of these people initiated a conversation with him. Yet, he did not hesitate to start a conversation with them, although they were all occupied with other matters.

In the third experience of the wildness of God revealed in Jesus, we witnessed how he changes the direction we set for ourselves. This is hallmark of the resurrection stories. In Jerusalem, the women visiting the tomb see him and cling to his feet, the oldest image of how we try to hold in place what we love. But he tells them »Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me.« (Mt 28, 10). The women do not get to stay with him, but they must set out to visit the disciples. The disciples do not get to linger in Jerusalem, but they need to head out to Galilee. After Emmaus, the two disciples change course as well. »That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem.« (Lk 24, 33) Mary of Magdala also is told not to cling to him, but instead is sent to proclaim the resurrection to the disciples. In the Acts of the Apostles, he »ordered them not to leave Jerusalem«, (Acts 1, 4) a city filled with potential harm and danger for them, thus cancelling any plans for fleeing the city. He goes on to tell them that after the descent of the Spirit, they are to set out as witnesses well beyond Jerusalem »in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth« (Acts 1, 8). This was surely on no one's travel itinerary before his resurrection appearance.

The fourth element of the encounter with the Lord is that he stakes a claim to our strength. After their nets are filled to overflow, they are left with demanding tasks. »Now they were not able to haul it in because there were so many fish... But the other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish.« (Jn 21, 6-8) Peter is then asked to bring some of the fish for a breakfast meal, and he too must do some heavy labour. »So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, a hundred and fifty-three of them.« (Jn 21, 11) The resurrection may be brimming with life, but it remains a life we will be asked to haul in, and that stakes a claim on our strength.

Finally, we experienced the painful moment, when Jesus challenges our deeply held convictions. In John's account, he says »Cast the net to the right side of the boat«. Every frustration and hesitation we saw in Luke 5 is revisited and relived in this scene. He will challenge the deeply held conviction of Thomas, that such a life beyond death is not possible. He will challenge the deeply held convictions born of disillusionment in the two disciples heading to Emmaus. The certainty that locked doors and barricaded windows can keep out disturbances to their lives and safety is profoundly upset by the fact that he appears with ease behind them, and not just once.

In these days in which we rejoice in the resurrection of Jesus, we are also mourning the loss of Pope Francis. He personified the wildness of God in his discipleship through his unconventional, creative and spontaneous words, gestures and decisions. Therefore, he also had the courage to proclaim that wildness of God that shatters our expectations, conceptions and deeply held convictions of how and where God should work. In his message to for the XXXVI World Youth Day, he wrote to the youth of our Church:

»Today Christ speaks to you the same words that he spoke to Paul: Arise! Do not remain downcast or caught up in yourself: a mission awaits you! You too can testify to what Jesus has begun to accomplish in your lives. In Jesus' name, I ask you:

- Arise! Testify that you too were blind and encountered the light. You too have seen God's goodness and beauty in yourself, in others and in the communion of the Church, where all loneliness is overcome.

- Arise! Testify to the love and respect it is possible to instill in human relationships, in the lives of our families, in the dialogue between parents and children, between the young and the elderly.

- Arise! Uphold social justice, truth and integrity, human rights. Protect the persecuted, the poor and the vulnerable, those who have no voice in society, immigrants.

- Arise! Testify to the new way of looking at things that enables you to view creation with eyes brimming with wonder, that makes you see the Earth as our common home, and gives you the courage to promote an integral ecology.

- Arise! Testify that lives of failure can be rebuilt, that persons spiritually dead can rise anew, that those in bondage can once more be free, that hearts overwhelmed by sorrow can rediscover hope.

- Arise! Testify joyfully that Christ is alive! Spread his message of love and salvation among your contemporaries, at school and in the university, at work, in the digital world, everywhere.«

This is the way of the resurrection: casting nets, taking long journeys, bringing good news to others who linger in doubt and grief, having long conversation on the roads and in the gardens of life, asking strangers to stay the night, breaking bread, wandering beyond the doors we once firmly closed. The wildness of God will never rest while the fullness of life is yet to be sought, discovered and celebrated. We are somewhat inclined to think of the resurrection of Jesus as the happy end of the story, instead of seeing it as a glorious, hopeful and impelling beginning to stay the course for the fullness of life. Easter is not the finish line, but the beginning of the greatest race.

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