

## Easter in Our Hearts

On the first Easter morning Jesus met Mary Magdalene and the other Mary, who had been to the sepulcher and seen a vision of angels. He hailed them, saying, "Be not afraid!"

The first words that the Lord spoke after He had risen from the dead are like a mighty song that has echoed down the ages, giving people of all times joy and happiness and peace eternal. For when the women went to anoint their Lord and Master, who had been buried two days before, they found no one in the sepulcher. Then the Lord Himself met them and said, "All hail: be not afraid!"

Love and mercy and true religion cast out fear of every description from our hearts. The religion that worships the One True God knows no fear, for perfect love casts out fear. And so the Lord, when He looked upon these faithful women who loved Him so tenderly, gave them the glad assurance, "All hail! Be not afraid!"

These women had been filled with fear. The One whom they loved above all had been torn from them. They feared that they would never again know the bliss of hearing their Savior's voice. They feared that the cruel power of Rome and the malignant hatred of the ruling Jews had put an end to their hopes for a kingdom of heaven upon earth. For people only fear when they have lost hope. When courage and faith have departed from us, then we feel deserted.

Fear is a terrible thing. It makes us very unhappy. It robs us of our peace of mind. It takes all the joy out of life. It is one of the real enemies of true happiness. The Lord knew how fear hurts men better than anyone else. And so, to give assurance and comfort to the women, the first thing He said after He rose was: "All hail! Be not afraid!"

These women had followed the Lord all through His earthly work. As the Word tells us, they had gone from place to place after Him, ministering unto Him, that is, doing things to make Him happy and comfortable. They had seen Him do wonderful miracles. But then they had seen Him betrayed and beaten and cruelly killed.

The Marys stood and watched all this from far off. All day Saturday they were heartbroken. The only thing they could think to do was to prepare some sweet spices with which to anoint their Lord's dead body. They must have been afraid for their own lives, afraid of the soldiers and the dark early morning. But still they hastened to the tomb. There, at first, a new fear filled their hearts, for His body was gone. They feared that someone had come and stolen it. Then an angel appeared and told them not to be afraid; that the Lord had risen, as He had said that He would. And, while they were still wondering, the Lord Himself met them and said, "All hail! Be not afraid!" And they fell down and worshiped Him.

Can you imagine how happy these women were when they saw the living Lord, whom they had feared dead? Can you imagine what joy filled their breasts when they saw His dear face and heard His voice? Have you ever lost something that you loved, and thought that you would never see again, and then suddenly found it? That was the kind of new joy that these women felt. If any of you have lost a sibling or parent or dear friend, imagine the joy you will feel in the other world when you meet them, still alive, in heaven.

But Easter also has another meaning for people who have read the Heavenly Doctrine for the New Church. We know that the stories in the Word are not dead things that happened hundreds of years ago, but living things that may happen in us, if we will let them. In each of our minds there is a tomb where the Lord is laid, and that sepulcher is our memory. Into that memory, teachers and parents and ministers have helped to put knowledges from the Lord. Those knowledges are Divine truths from the Lord's Word, and they are buried in our memories, just as the Lord's body was buried in the tomb. And the great stone is rolled over them by all the selfish things that we love to do. For everything selfish in each of us tries to keep the Lord from rising. But we must never forget that the angels are always present with us. The women did not know who would roll the stone away from the Lord's sepulcher. But the angels did it for them. So it will be with us. The angels will always roll away the stone that keeps the Lord from rising in our hearts, if we will let them.

What is Easter in your lives? There is an Easter morning every time you let one of the truths you have learned rise into use. Every time one of the truths buried in your memory rises into your life, and you make use of it, that, for you, is an Easter morning. Every time you want to steal and don't do it, because the Lord's Word says it is wrong, then the Lord is risen in your heart. Every time you are tempted to lie, and you refuse to do it because the Lord said it is wrong, then, for you, there is an Easter morning. Every time you are tempted to swear or say things you should not say, and you refuse to do it because the Lord said it is wrong, then the Lord rises in your heart. And, when you keep the Lord's Commandments, He is really with you and His love casts out all fear. He meets you in the way and says, "All hail! Be not afraid!"

If you have a clear conscience, you will feel the angels with you, protecting and guarding you, and you will not be afraid. You will not be afraid of being punished, for you will know that you have done no wrong. You will not be afraid of dying, for you will know that heaven awaits you. You will not be afraid of anything, for you will know that the Lord is with you, your Father in heaven. And whenever you shun any evil and a new good arises in your heart, He will say to you: "All hail! Be not afraid!"