

## ENRICHING YOUR REFLECTION

Same time last year, we had just heard about James Cameron's and Simcha Jacobovici's documentary on *The Lost Tomb of Jesus*. Their claims were just immense.

Cameron was speaking of their findings as "the most stunning archeological find of the last century" and Jacobovici had the feeling, when starting his investigation, of being "on the verge of the biggest archeology story ever."

As a matter of fact, it is true that, would their allegations prove to be true, it would ask for a radical rewriting of "the greatest story ever told," that of Jesus of Nazareth as we have it in the gospels and as it developed throughout twenty centuries of Christianity. But having studied and taught Scripture for more than 30 years now, I was rather skeptical and wanted to know about the evidence they had to support their allegations.

They found ossuaries in the Jerusalem area dating back to the first century. Fine. But the rest is most of the time speculation, "probabilities," wishful argumentation, poor handling of New Testament evidence, and, shall I say, superficial reading of Christian apocrypha like *The Gospel of Mary* and *The Gospel of Philip*.

To make a long story short, let me just remind you that it is all the more refreshing and all the more urgent that we Christians revisit the New Testament resurrection narratives, as well as listening to other differing accounts. We will soon realize that there is no account of the resurrection proper, which means that the evangelists remain respectful of the mystery itself and modest about their knowledge.

In addition, that the experience of the empty tomb—not of "the lost tomb" nor of an undocumented second burial of Jesus—was essential in the process that led the disciple to finally receive the good news of the Resurrection of Jesus.

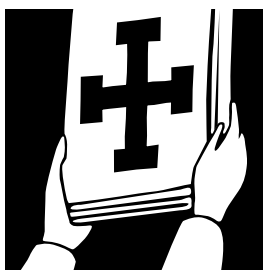
Finally, the decisive and ultimate factor that made the disciples believe in the Resurrection was the personal encounter with the Risen Jesus. The rest is fiction and wishful rewriting of the New Testament. Our best access to "the true story of Jesus" or to "the real Jesus" remains the four canonical gospels.

## ENGAGING YOUR COMMUNITY

After you have read and reflected prayerfully on the Scripture, take an outward glance.

Think about the experiences and concerns of the people to whom you will be preaching.

- [Acts] "*But to us, the witnesses chosen by God in advance.*" What is the responsibility that comes with celebrating Easter? How does one discharge that responsibility in daily living?
- [Colossians {option 1}] "*For you have died.*" Did your parish initiate any adults at the Easter Vigil last night? Are there stories you can use to illuminate the sort of "death" that the renewal of baptismal promises recalls and illuminates?
- [John] "*He had to rise from the dead.*" How does Jesus' resurrection validate his mission and the announcement of the "Kingdom of God"? How can you illuminate the link between resurrection and the transforming mission of Jesus?
- [Luke {afternoon gospel}] "*With that their eyes were opened.*" How is the "breaking of the bread" at the Eucharist meant to open our eyes to the continuing work of God in Christ? What new perspective on everyday choices comes with regularly joining oneself to Christ in the Paschal Mystery?



### Write a homily

What difference does it make that Jesus is risen? How does this shift the "frame" within which every choice now exists for the believer? How does it show God's verdict on Jesus' ministry and preaching, and on the demands Jesus made of those who would follow him? Your task, simple but extremely challenging, is to unveil the implications of what we celebrate and (in the renewal of baptismal vows) recommit to.