

### What if Jesus rose from the tomb?

*On a Sunday near Easter, a Sunday School teacher gave an empty plastic egg to each of the kids. She then sent them outside to find any sign of life and put it inside the egg. When they returned, one had a butterfly, another an ant and others had flowers and leaves. But one egg had nothing in it. It belonged to a boy who more often than once could not manage his assignments. Some of the kids laughed at him. But when the teacher asked him why he had not put any signs of life in his egg, he simply said, "Because the tomb was empty." This boy understood the Gospel: Easter is more than a celebration of natural life. Easter celebrates an empty tomb. Easter celebrates that nobody, that no force or any power, could keep Jesus in the tomb.*

The Bible in simple, almost childlike clarity, teaches us that Jesus died and rose. Every early Christian preacher made this the main theme of his message. And for all the centuries that followed, it remained the very core of the Good News preached about Jesus. On this truth all Christian faith and service are founded.

The Son of God could not be held by a sealed closed grave. Nothing could secure the tomb in such a way that it could keep the Messiah, the Christ of God, locked inside. No guards, no stone, and no fancy, clever theology, and no lie or deception can keep Jesus locked inside the tomb.

*In a cemetery in Hanover, Germany, is a grave on which were placed huge slabs of granite and marble cemented together and fastened with heavy steel clasps. It belongs to a woman who did not believe in the resurrection of the dead. Yet she directed in her will that her grave be made so secure that if there were a resurrection, it could not reach her. On the tomb stone were inscribed these words: "This burial place must never be opened." In time, an acorn seed, covered over by the slabs, began to grow. It pushed its way through the soil and outside from beneath the slabs. As the trunk grew larger over the years, the slabs were shifted and they forced the steel clasps from their sockets. A tiny seed had become a tree, and the tree pushed aside the heavy slabs.*

The life force contained in a little seed is but a small reflection of God's power revealed, seen at Easter. No more could the slabs keep the acorn within the grave than could the guards, authorities and lies keep Christ within the tomb.

When Jesus was laid in the tomb on the first Good Friday afternoon, hope had died even in the hearts of Jesus' most loyal friends. It looked as if his enemies had won a victory. The disciples thought the Master was defeated. But the testimony of many that had fellowship with him before his ascension, even 500 people at the same time, says, Christ defeated the enemy!

The chief priests and Pharisees went to Pilate to get a security order.

*(Mt 27:63-64) "Sir," they said, "we remember that while he was still alive that deceiver said, 'After three days I will rise again.' So give the order for the tomb to be made secure until the third day. Otherwise, his disciples may come and steal the body and tell the people that he has been raised from the dead.*

To their credit we can say that they accurately quoted what Jesus said. Jesus did predict his own resurrection. He said to his followers:

*(Mt 20:18-19) "We are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and the teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death and will turn him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified. On the third day he will be raised to life!" (Mt 16:21-23; 17:22-23)*

The chief priests and Pharisees were secretly afraid. Not of a grave robbery, but of the great "what if?" What if Jesus did arise?

What if the lifeless body started to breathe again? What if the wrapped-up, bandaged body stood up and came to them?

What if Jesus was telling the truth?