

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Amen.

The thoughts for tonight's homily come from the first few verses of St. Luke's account of the Resurrection. "But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they went to the tomb, taking the spices they had prepared. And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they went in they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus" (Luke 24:1-3).

We pray: May the words of my mouth and the meditation of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our Rock and Redeemer, Amen.

Are you prepared? Are you ready? That's a good thing for us to consider on this night of vigil. As we keep vigil, as we wait and watch, it's a good thing to ponder how prepared we are for what is to come.

It's also something that many are thinking about with all that tomorrow brings. Am I ready? Am I ready for all the people I'm going to see at the beautiful church service tomorrow? Am I prepared for the company? For the family dinner? For all the extra people and extra things that can come with Easter? Am I prepared?

The women who went to Jesus' tomb on the first day of the week thought they were prepared. Consider how well they had thought it out and worked in advance. They got everything ready ahead of time so that they could rest on the Sabbath according to God's command.

They didn't have much time, but they were thinking ahead. While they were mourning, they kept busy during those few hours between Jesus' death and when the Sabbath would begin at sundown. They followed as Jesus' body was carried to the tomb. They saw where the tomb was and how Jesus was laid. They got the spices and the ointment. And they made their plan so that they could get to the tomb first thing on Sunday morning to anoint Jesus' body. Then, they rested according to the commandment.

They were prepared. They were prepared, until they couldn't find Jesus' body in the tomb. And then their plans and their preparations to show their devotion to Jesus go out the window. Luke doesn't tell us anything more about the spices after the women can't find Jesus' body. He doesn't tell us they carried them home. He doesn't tell us that they used them another way – that they burned them as an offering to the Lord or sold them to give to the poor. There's no more mention of the spices because the body wasn't in the tomb. So all of their preparations become insignificant.

We too might like to think of all the things that we have done to get ready for Easter. We went to church more during Lent. We prayed more regularly or fervently over the last 40 days. Maybe we fasted or gave up something for Lent to practice self-denial. If we did, that is really well and good, but ultimately that doesn't prepare us to meet our Resurrected Lord.

No, our sin keeps us from preparing ourselves to see the Risen Christ. After all, it was our sin that caused Jesus to go to the cross.

But the Good News is that our Lord is actually the one who is working to take care of things. While the faithful women thought they were doing something for Jesus that first Easter morning, it was really Jesus who was doing the preparing. His passion and death, that was what had to be done. That was the work of preparation they needed, and it's what we need too.

Jesus has prepared everything. He has done all that you needed. He lived a sinless life. He offered the perfect sacrifice. He has won the victory by His resurrection from the dead. And this is what had to be done so that a table could be prepared for you. Here it is, a foretaste of the feast to come. Jesus' gift for you while He prepares a place for you in His Father's house.

So be assured as you keep vigil tonight, you are ready. You are prepared, not because of what you've done, but in spite of what you've done. You're prepared, because of Jesus. You're prepared because Jesus died for you. You're prepared, because Christ is Risen: He is risen, indeed! Alleluia! Amen!

Now the peace of God that passes all understanding keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus the Lord. Amen.