



On Easter morning Pope Francis said God's announcement to his people always comes as a surprise, like the shock of the disciples who found Jesus' tomb empty after his resurrection, and told Christians not to waste time responding to the good news they've been given.

“The announcements of God are always a surprise, because ours is a God of surprises,” the Pope said April 1, on Easter morning. “From the beginning of the history of salvation, from Abraham, who God tells to 'go, get up and go to the land I send you to,' there's always one surprise after another.”

“God doesn't know how to make an announcement, a proclamation without surprising us,” he said, “and that surprise moves your heart, it touches you. It happens when you don't expect it.”

Francis also spoke of the haste with which the women and the disciples in John's Gospel responded when they heard news of the empty tomb and Jesus' resurrection, and he posed a question to those present for the Mass, asking “what about you?”

“What about me? Is my heart open to God's surprises?” he said, urging Christians to ask themselves: “Am I able to go with great haste, or do I stay back and say, 'I'll go tomorrow'?”

Pope Francis celebrated Easter Mass in St. Peter's Square after presiding over the Easter Vigil inside the basilica the night before, bringing a close to the Easter Triduum and the events of Holy Week.

The altar during Mass was bedecked with some 50,000 flowers of different varieties, which were a gift from florists in Holland.

Though he usually sticks to his text during formal liturgies, Francis did not

prepare a homily for Easter morning, and spoke to pilgrims in brief, off-the-cuff remarks. He did the same thing last year, meaning a spontaneous reflection Easter morning could be a new trend for the Argentine pope.

In his short homily, the pope focused on three aspects of the day's Gospel passage from John, in which Peter and John run to the tomb after Mary Magdalene tells them she found it empty earlier that morning.

The three aspects Pope Francis focused on are the surprise of the announcement, the haste with which the women and the disciples ran to the tomb, and the personal response of each

Please see below for the full text of Pope Francis' homily:

After having listened to the word of God, this passage from the Gospel, I want to say three things. First, the announcement: the Lord is Risen. That proclamation, that from the time of the early Christians they would greet each other this way: the Lord is risen! And the women that were there to anoint the Lord's body, they found themselves in front of a surprise. The surprise. The announcements of God are always a surprise, because ours is a God of surprises. So from the beginning of the history of salvation, from Abraham, who God tells to 'go, get up and go to the land I send you to,' there's always one surprise after another. God doesn't know how to make an announcement, a proclamation without surprising us. And that surprise moves your heart, it touches you. It happens when you don't expect it. It's a surprise from 'down low', it takes you off guard. God's announcement was a surprise.

The rush, the women ran, they went in a hurry to get to the tomb, to say 'we found this!' The surprises of God put us on the path, on the journey right away, without waiting. So they run to see, and Peter and John, they run. The shepherds, the night of Christmas when Jesus was born in Bethlehem, ran...the Samaritan woman runs to tell her people, 'this is new, I met a man who told me everything I have ever done!' These people run, they leave what they're doing. The housewife leaves the potatoes in the pot, and they'll be burned, but it's important to run, to see that surprise that announcement. Today this also happens to us in our neighborhoods, when something happens and people go to see it. People go with great haste. Andrew didn't waste time and he went to Peter to say: 'we found the Messiah!' The surprises, the good news, are always given like this, with great haste. But in the Gospel there is a person who takes their time, who doesn't want to take a risk, but the Lord is good, and he waits for him with great love. This is Thomas, who said 'I'll believe when I see his wounds.' The Lord is patient with those people who do not get up and leave with great haste.

Thirdly, is a question: and me, what? What about me? Is my heart open to God's surprises? Am I able to go with great haste, or with that chant, do I stay back and say 'I'll go tomorrow'? What is the surprise saying to me? John and Peter, they ran to the tomb. John in his Gospel, tells us to believe. Even Peter, believed, but in his own way, with that faith that is a bit mixed with remorse for having denied the Lord. The announcement that has made a surprise, to run and go with great haste, and the question: what about me, today, in this Easter in 2018? What about me? What about you?