

## **Easter Sunday/Mass of the day B/2012**

All the readings of this Easter Sunday convey just one message: Jesus Christ is risen; he is alive; he is victorious over death. God is bigger than death; he has raised Jesus from the dead. Because God is life everlasting, he has given life back to Jesus by raising him from the dead.

The first reading of the Acts of the Apostles describes the context of the life of Jesus among the people of Israel and the scope of his ministry in their midst. It recalls the big moments of the life of Jesus, from his baptism in the Jordan and his healing mission to his death on the cross, in order to proclaim the great event of the resurrection.

In his speech, Peter attests that he and his fellow apostles are eye witnesses of everything that happened to Jesus, including his resurrection from the dead. He affirms that Jesus has commissioned them to preach to the people and testify that he is the one appointed by God as judge of the living and the dead. As all the prophets from the past bear witness to him, anyone who believes in him will receive forgiveness of sins through his name.

All that helps us understand what is at stake in today's Gospel as it relates the event of the resurrection of Jesus. In fact, the Gospel says that when Mary of Magdala, on the first day of the week, went to the tomb early in the morning, she found the stone removed from the tomb. As she could not deal with that situation alone, she returned quickly to the town to tell Peter and John.

Alerted by the news, Peter and John, with Mary of Magdala, came running to the tomb in order to see what had happened. As Peter was slow, John, who was faster than Peter, arrived the first at the tomb. He saw the burial cloths, but did not go in. When Peter arrived after him, he jumped in and saw the burial cloths and the cloth that covered Jesus' face, but rolled up in a separate place. In turn, John entered too; and he saw and believed. However, they did not all yet understand the Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.

What does this narrative on the resurrection of Jesus teach us? The first point I want to insist on is about the truth of the resurrection. First of all, we have to remember the panic in the rank of the disciples when Jesus was arrested and put to death. Many of his followers ran away and went into hiding. But now, we see a shift in their attitude; they come out and speak openly, as it appears in the speech of Peter in the Acts of the Apostles.

Peter's boldness in speaking out openly is an evident sign that something happened to the apostles which gave them courage and hope. What that happened to them, in fact, was that Jesus, who was dead, was now alive. His resurrection from the dead gave them courage to get out and speak without fear. Jesus himself commissioned them to be his witnesses and to proclaim to others that he was risen.

In that perspective, Easter means that we celebrate the power of life that is bigger than death. With Jesus, we live in the hope that the outcome of our life will be different; whatever might be our suffering and disappointment in the present time. Therefore, hope in the life everlasting becomes our daily motto. That is why a man without hope is a dead man, because he has no perspective for the future. A woman without hope is a

dead woman, because she does not have any future. The resurrection of Jesus gives us to hope for the future, to believe that we can one day share in God's life in heaven.

The second point I want to highlight is that the resurrection of Jesus is the foundation of our faith. In fact, if Jesus did not rise, there would never have been faith in him. If Jesus were not alive, there would never have been Christians who confess him as the savior of the world. It is because Jesus is alive that we gather this morning in his name to thank God for the gift of life he has given us by raising him from the dead.

However, the resurrection of Jesus cannot be treated as we treat scientific facts. With a scientific fact, once a formula is given, the fact can be repeated with the same result. That is not the case with the resurrection of Jesus. It is a unique event which cannot be repeated in history. It is an event which can be approached only in faith. In its essence, faith is trust in God beyond material proof.

That is why at Easter morning, there is nothing to see, except the words of Jesus to listen to and the witness of the Scripture to believe in. It is for that reason that when Peter and his colleagues came early morning to the tomb, they saw nothing other than an empty tomb. And yet, they believed that Christ was alive. In fact, Christ was alive in their midst as he would appear later to many of them. Christ is alive now in our midst as we gather in his name.

The last point I want to bring is that the resurrection of Jesus invites us to have another look at the reality of death. In fact, we cannot deny the sadness of death, the anxiety it causes us and the void it leaves around us. However, whatever might be its burden on us and the sorrow it brings, death is not an absolute reality, because we die with the hope of something bigger than it. That is why the credo speaks of the resurrection of the body and life everlasting as realities we are waiting for.

In that sense, life does not finish completely with death. Its ultimate meaning lies in the resurrection of Jesus. In the same way, death is just a transformation of our present condition of life. It cannot prevent God's life to flourish in us. Like Christ, when we die, God will give us life anew. He will let us share in the resurrection of Jesus.

That is why the resurrection teaches us that the grave is no more a place where death is closed up behind a rolled stone. On the contrary, the stone of death has been removed forever from the tomb. When we celebrate Christ's resurrection, we anticipate our victory over death. As St Paul says, because we have died with Christ in baptism, our life is now hidden in Jesus. And when Christ will appear, then we will appear with him in glory.

That is the hope we all bear to share one day in the glory of Jesus. Let us keep it alive in us and do whatever we should so that we share in the resurrection of Jesus. I wish to each one of you and to your families a Blessed Easter. May God bless you all!

**Acts of Apostles 10: 34a, 37-43; Colossians 3: 1-4; John 20: 1-9**



Homily Date: April 8, 2012

© 2012 – Fr Felicien I. Mbala, PhD, STD

Contact: [www.mbala.org](http://www.mbala.org)

Document Name: 20120408homily.pdf