

Easter Sunday/Mass of the Day C/2013

The readings of this Easter Sunday talk about the joy of the resurrection. They describe how Jesus was risen and how the disciples were transformed by this event. They also invite us to believe that Jesus is alive and his resurrection from the dead is the ground for our hope for eternal life.

In the first reading of the Acts of the Apostles, Peter describes the story of the life of Jesus. He relates how everything started with the baptism preached by John and how Jesus was anointed with the Holy Spirit and power. He describes also how he went on doing good and healing the sick.

He, then, says that the apostles are witnesses of what Jesus did in the country and all over. As they witnessed his death when the Jews hung him on the cross, they also witnessed his resurrection as well. They were with him before his death as well as after his resurrection. They even ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead.

Peter finishes his speech by saying that the risen Christ has given the apostles the mission of preaching to all the people and to testify that he is the one appointed by God as the judge of the living and the dead. Therefore, as the prophets foretold, anyone who believes in Jesus will receive the forgiveness of sins through him.

The great message this text brings is that Jesus is alive. Though he was dead, he now lives by the power of God who raised him on the third day. The text affirms also that the apostles saw him before and after his resurrection. Therefore, they testify that he is alive and risen from the dead.

This text allows us to understand what is at stake in today's Gospel as it describes the resurrection of Jesus. In fact, it was early Sunday morning when Mary of Magdala went to the tomb which she found to be open. Thinking that the Jews had taken the body of Jesus away, she then ran as quickly as she could to alert Peter and John.

When Peter and John came to the tomb, they found the things as Mary told them. As Peter was slow, John came to the tomb first and saw the burial cloths. When Peter arrived after him, he directly entered the tomb and saw also the burial cloths and the cloth that covered the head of Jesus rolled up in a separate place. In turn, John also entered the tomb and as he saw everything, he believed. But, they did not understand the Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.

What do we learn from this Gospel? The first thing I want to highlight is about the reality of the resurrection. First of all, what is a reality? According to the Webster dictionary a reality is something that is neither derivative nor dependent, but exists necessarily. If something exists necessarily, it means that it is not fiction or an invention. It is true.

However, we have to make a distinction between a scientific reality and spiritual reality. A scientific reality depends on an ensemble of the laws that someone can repeat, in the same circumstances, for the same result. A spiritual reality, on the contrary, is unique and does not depend on human laws, but on the power of God who is capable of writing straight with crooked lines.

It was that power of God that made the humanly impossible possible in the resurrection of Jesus. In fact, when Mary went to the tomb that Sunday, she had only one thing in

mind, namely to embalm the body of Jesus. Now, she is taken by surprise: the stone was rolled aside; the tomb was empty and Jesus was not there. At first glance, she thought that the Jews had stolen the body of Jesus. But, if the cadaver was stolen, then, they should have taken also all the burial cloths covering it. And yet, they were trailing on the ground separately. Slowly and slowly, they understood that Jesus was really risen and what he told them in his teaching about his life and death was true.

The resurrection of Jesus, indeed, is the foundation of our faith. If Jesus did not rise from the dead, there would never be faith in him. Perhaps, the books of history would talk about him, but without any impact on the life of people and nations. It is because Jesus is alive that for two thousand years, in spite of possible crises due to human weaknesses inside the Church, Christianity has never died. It is because Jesus is alive that we are gathered here this morning to praise God and to thank him for the gift of life he has given us in Jesus Christ.

The risen Christ does not demand of us something extraordinary, but just a simple act of faith in him. If we accept this request, then, we have to become not only his disciples, but also his witnesses. What this means is that we have to change our ways of being, thinking and acting and to conform them to the word of Jesus, as St Paul suggests in the second reading.

The second thing I want to highlight is that the resurrection of Jesus is the fulfillment of human longing for happiness. In fact, there is in each one of us a deep desire to be in good health and to enjoy life to the maximum of our strength.

However, we know by experience that, in spite of our wishes, things do not always go our way. On a daily basis, we face disappointment, suffering, sickness and, eventually death. With regard to such a reality, Easter reminds us that what we long for and we cannot obtain by our own strength is given to us by faith, in the resurrection of Jesus. That is why Easter is, above all, a feast of life, a life that is bigger than death, bigger than human expectations that are limited to this world.

Moreover, as Jesus became a man for our sake, his death is also for our sake. In that perspective, Jesus' resurrection is for our sake too. Here, we have a proof that, though we have to die a human death, we will one day share in the resurrection of Jesus. What happened to Jesus will also happen to us. That is why we are courageous, even if we now have problems and crisis. We know for sure that one day it will be fine.

Of course, that does not mean that our troubles are over, but it gives us a certainty that God will not abandon us. As he did with Jesus, so will he act with us. He will intervene and give us life anew. That is the good news of Easter. What we celebrate is the feast of hope and life: hope that God will not abandon us and life that is bigger than death. Happy Easter to all!

Acts 10: 34a-43; 1 Corinthians 5: 6b-8; John 20: 1-9



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