

Easter Sunday/Mass of the Day C/2016

The readings of this Easter Sunday talk about the joy of the resurrection. They describe the way Jesus' disciples found the tomb empty and the effect of the resurrection on the first community of believers. They invite us to believe that Jesus is alive and his resurrection is the ground of our hope for eternal life.

The first reading recalls the speech of Peter to the people in which he describes the story of Jesus from his baptism in the Jordan to his death on the cross. It highlights in particular the fact that Jesus was anointed with the Holy Spirit and power, as well as his healing action over the people.

Then, the text describes how the disciples are witnesses of Jesus' resurrection and how Christ himself commissioned them to preach about him all over the world. Finally the text shows the effects of the resurrection on all those who will believe in Jesus.

This text allows us to understand what is at stake in today's Gospel as it describes the resurrection of Jesus. The Gospel starts by indicating the hour Mary of Magdala went to the tomb and how she found it open.

Then, it describes how she alerted Peter and John who run quickly to the tomb and found things as Mary told them. After that, the Gospel describes what the two disciples did, how they found the empty tomb, saw the burial clothes and believed, though they did not understand the Scriptures that Jesus had to rise from the dead.

What can we say about this feast? Today I want to talk about the resurrection of Jesus as the expression of the power of God to give life. In fact, God is life and because he is life, he can give it abundantly. The first to whom God gave life in abundance is Jesus.

The resurrection of Jesus is the expression of the power of God to give life. It is an event unique in human history. It does not depend on human laws, which can be repeated in the same circumstances, for the same result. It is not an invention or a fiction, but a truth that depends on the power of God to make possible what seems impossible .

In fact, when Mary went to the tomb that Sunday morning, she had only one thing in mind, namely to embalm the body of Jesus. But, what a surprise when she saw the stone rolled aside and the tomb empty. At first glance, she thought that the Jews had stolen the body of Jesus. But, if the body was stolen, then, they should have taken also all the burial cloths covering it. And yet, they were trailing on the ground separately. That is the reason why, in the end, Mary, Peter and John, eventually, 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 as we do with important personalities who have marked world history, but that would have been just that.

It is because Jesus is alive that for two thousand years, in spite of 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 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 happy and to enjoy life to the maximum of our strength.

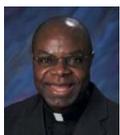
However, we experience every day that our wishes and desires are not always fulfilled. On a daily basis, indeed, we face disappointment, suffering, sickness and, eventually death. With regard to such a reality of short lived experiences, Easter reminds us that what we long for and we cannot obtain by 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 crises. We know for sure that one day it will be fine. We know for sure that beyond the tunnel of suffering and present situation, there is a light.

Of course, it does not mean that our troubles are over because Jesus is risen, but at least it gives us a certainty that God will not abandon us forever. As he did with Jesus, so he will 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, because God will not abandon us, and life because in the end God will triumph over the negative forces we are dealing with now. That is why we have to firmly believe that beyond the tunnel of suffering and death, there is a light.

The risen Christ does not demand of us extraordinary things, but just a simple act of faith in him. That is why the resurrection of Christ challenges us to believe in Jesus with the whole of our heart even if we cannot touch him with our hands or see him with our bodily eyes, but with the eyes of the heart. If we accept this request, then, we have to become not only his disciples, but also his witnesses. What it means is that we have to change our ways of being, thinking and acting in order to conform them to the word and teaching of Jesus. Happy Easter to everybody!

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



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