

Easter Vigil B/2018

Tonight we gather, as the people of God, in order to celebrate the foundational event of our faith, namely the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. The readings of tonight convey just one message, namely that Jesus Christ is alive and victorious over death. He is our standard bearer who brings us the light of God in order to save us.

The resurrection of Jesus, in fact, is the foundation of our faith. If Jesus did not rise from the dead, people would certainly remember him as we do with important personalities who have marked the history of humanity, like the Pharaoh of Egypt, Julius Cesar in Italy, George Washington or Abraham Lincoln in USA or Mani Kongo for the Congolese people, etc. But, all that would just be a chapter in the books of history and nothing more. It is because Jesus Christ is risen that almost two billions of Christians throughout the world believe in him and worship him as savior and Lord.

As St Paul says, "If Christ is not risen from the dead, our faith is in vain and vain is also our hope in the resurrection of the dead". The Bible is full of signs that confirm the claim that Jesus Christ is risen from the dead. Tonight is displayed before us the sign of the empty tomb.

In fact, when the pious women went to the tomb that morning, they did not expect to find it open. In truth, they were motivated by the love of this man whose teaching and actions had galvanized the whole of their country. They wanted only to show that they cared for him and wanted to fulfill the requirements of the Jewish tradition by embalming his body.

But, to their surprise, they found the tomb empty and the stone that covered it rolled aside! When they saw the angel, he just told them the truth: "Jesus has been raised; he is not here". That truth is what we celebrate tonight, namely that Jesus Christ is risen; he is not in the tomb; God gave him life anew. Those who crucified him thought that it was over with him; but God could not keep him indefinitely in the tomb. He had the last word and raised him up.

In that sense, Easter means that life is bigger than death and God is bigger than human beings. Nothing is impossible to him. Never will the gates of death prevail against him. With the resurrection of Jesus, we are assured that the outcome of our life will be different; whatever might be the problems we are dealing with today. That is why our daily motto should be hope and not fear. Whatever might be the problems we have, we should always keep our hope alive.

The resurrection of Jesus compels us to have another look on the reality of death as human phenomenon. In fact, we cannot deny the sadness of the death of our beloved ones, 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. Death is just the 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. In that sense, when we celebrate Christ's resurrection, we anticipate our victory over death. Let us keep that hope alive in us and celebrate Easter with joy. May God bless you all! Alleluia!

Ezekiel 36: 16-17a, 18-28; Romans 6: 3-11; Mk 16: 1-7

Homily Date: April 1, 2018

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Document Name: 20180401homily.pdf