

Easter Sunday: The Resurrection of the Lord A2023

Today we celebrate the feast of life and victory of our Lord Jesus over death. The resurrection of our Lord is the greatest event God has ever performed in human history. The resurrection of our Lord is the foundation of our faith and of our salvation. If Jesus did not rise from the dead, there would never have been faith in him. Perhaps people would have been talking about him as we do with the important personalities who have impacted the history of the world. But, that would have been just a chapter in the books of history.

It is because Jesus Christ is alive that we are gathered in his name this morning to praise God and thank him for the gift of life he has given us by raising him from the dead. It is because death could not keep him prisoner in its abyss that we are gathered this morning to give witness to the truth that he is alive. We are not alone. Christians all over the world rejoice in this wonderful day because the Father did not leave our Lord in the entrails of the grave forever. By raising him, the Father has made him our Savior and Redeemer and there is no salvation in none other than him.

That is the message Saint Peter brings to his compatriots, the Jews, as we heard in the Act of the Apostles. Saint Peter reminds them that everything that happened to Jesus was according to God's plan. From the beginning, God anointed him with the Holy Spirit in order to do good and heal the sick. All his wonderful actions and teaching were through the power of God.

However, in spite of the good deeds done, the Jews killed him by hanging him on a tree. The apostles are the witnesses of what happened to him. They were with him before and after his resurrection; they ate and drank with him; they listened to his teaching and saw his miracles. They saw him dead, but they also saw him raised. It is that witness which they have transmitted to us so that we, too, may believe and come to eternal life.

It is that message that today's Gospel continues by describing what happened that "first day of the week". While the apostles were sad and everything was gloomy for them because of our Lord's death, God intervened in a wonderful way and raised him from the dead. Mary Magdalene, Peter and the beloved disciple, who went to the tomb in the early morning, could not believe with their eyes. They are taken by surprise: our Lord is risen. The stone is removed from the tomb; the burial cloths trail on the ground and the tomb is empty. Jesus is risen; Christ is restored to the fullness of life; he is alive.

At that moment on, the disciples understood that the death of our Lord was not at all a defeat, but a victory of life over the forces of Evil. Although they ran away following the arrest of our Lord; though they hid themselves for fear of the Jews, now they regained confidence. On that big day of the resurrection, everything became clear to them that all that happened to Jesus, with his passion and death, was according to God's plan.

Of course, there was the bloody Good Friday with its tears and emotions, but it was not the end of the episode. Who could resist God's power to create anew that has been destroyed by death? No; God could but raise our Lord Jesus and confirm the truthfulness of his teachings and action. No grave could have the power to prevent God's life to spring out and reach us. No; Jesus was not a liar; he was truly sent by the Father so that whoever believes in him might have eternal life. All that he said and did came truly from the Father.

Now, we all understand that it was meant to be that way. Our Lord's death on the cross was not a mere fate, but a gift of himself to the Father for the forgiveness of the sin of the world. In the resurrection, the Father confirms our Lord as the mediator between heaven and earth, and as the only one in the name of whom salvation is brought to mankind. By raising Jesus from the dead, at the same time that the Father reveals the unique relationship that links him to our Lord, he legitimates his claim of lordship over the whole universe.

To adequately approach the resurrection of our Lord, we need faith. Only faith can make us understand that there is no unbreakable gap between God and death, that the risen Christ leads us from death to life, making us new creatures. It is only in faith that we can attest to Christ's resurrection. Faith is not believing without proof, but trusting God beyond any proof. That is why faith in the resurrection of Jesus implies hope, trust, and confidence that even in the worse of a dark night, with God, a dawn is always possible.

Christ's resurrection means that the grave is no more a place where death is closed up behind a rolled stone. The stone of death has been removed forever from the tomb. The risen Christ has destroyed forever the reign of death. He has promoted life and consecrated all those who believe in him to eternal life in the kingdom of his Father. Like a beautiful plant that emerges from a sown seed, so the death of our Lord has brought life to the world.

Christ's resurrection means that our own physical death is not an obstacle to the flourishing of God's life in us. With the God of Jesus Christ, there are no more frontiers between death and life. Like Christ, when we die God gives us life anew. Christ himself makes us participate in his own resurrection. His resurrection is a prelude to our resurrection.

That is the good news of Easter, namely that no matter what we endure in this life, God will not abandon us in the tomb. He will intervene in our favor because of his faithfulness and fidelity. Then, we will understand that we would not have run in vain; we would not have accepted so much sacrifice for the sake of our faith in vain; we would not have lived our Christian commitments with so much courage, determination and abnegation for nothing.

Easter pushes us to raise our eyes above in hope, and wait with trust for our redemption. No matter what we endure, God will raise us up. The resurrection of our Lord challenges us to trust him firmly and hope with eager patience for our redemption. There is an important lesson we need to learn in every suffering we endure. There is never a Good Friday without Easter. Easter affirms that we will never be abandoned by God, that nothing is ever hopeless. Happy Easter to all!

Acts 10: 34a, 37-43; Colossians 6: 1-4; John 20: 1-9



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