

## Easter Vigil B2024

I want to start the homily of this Holy Night with the invocation of Psalm 118: 16 that says: "God's right hand is raised; God's right hand has worked marvels." That was the song the people of Israel chanted the night they went out of Egypt. As they saw, with their own eyes, the Egyptians drowned into the Sea and the children of Israel crossing over on dry shore, they burst into song of thanksgiving to the wonderful Lord whose mercy endures forever.

Anytime that the children of Israel won victory over their enemies, they chanted again and again this song that has become to them like a national anthem. I guess that night of Easter when the news of the resurrection of our Lord Jesus became evident, the disciples certainly broke into song of thanksgiving to the wonderful God whose mercy endures forever.

What happened that night was unexpected and a surprise. Of course, when our Lord Jesus was still alive, he talked about rising from dead, but the disciples did not have any concept of it. How could they, because it did not happen before? We can see it in the attitude of Mary Magdalene and Mary, the mother of James and Salome. They bought spices and brought with them to the tomb to anoint the body of the dead, Jesus.

To their great astonishment, the tomb was empty; our Lord was not there; he was risen. The concern they had about the removal of the stone from the entrance of the tomb became useless because it had been rolled back. The angel they saw reassured them: "Jesus of Nazareth, the crucified, you are seeking has been raised; he is not here".

That marvelous news of the resurrection of our Lord Jesus is what we celebrate tonight. Beyond the history of what happened in those circumstances of time, place and epoch under Pontius Pilate, we celebrate, here and now, the mystery of the power of God who gives life anew. We celebrate what the risen Lord accomplishes in our midst and among us as a community of those who believe in him, a community called to conversion, gathered in faith, and gifted with the Holy Spirit of holiness. We celebrate God's taking possession of our hearts in his son Jesus at their deepest core by re-creating us as a community rich in compassion, steadfast in hope, and fearless in the search for justice and peace.

Tonight we celebrate the founding event that gives meaning and sense to our faith: "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", St Paul writes to the Corinthians (1 Cor 15: 17). Easter means that life is bigger than death and God is bigger than human beings. Easter reminds us that nothing is impossible to God and never will the gates of death prevail against him. With the resurrection of our Lord, we are assured that the outcome of our life will be different; whatever might be the problems we are dealing with today.

The resurrection of our Lord compels us to have another look on the reality of death as human phenomenon. For sure, 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; 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 gives us life anew.

The resurrection of our Lord teaches us 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. 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. Peace to all of you and your families as you gather with us tonight to celebrate the resurrection of our Lord.

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



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