

Homily of Easter Sunday, Year A, 2023

Acts 10:3, 37-43; Psalm 118:1-2, 16-17, 22-23; 1 Corinthians 5:6-8; John 20:1-9

The Easter date is not set as that of Christmas. The Catholic Church has determined the date of Easter since 325 AD. In that year, the Council of Nicaea established that Easter be celebrated on the first Sunday following the full moon after the spring equinox (when night and day are of equal length). This is worked out by ecclesial geographers.

Easter is the greatest Christian celebration. It is celebrated for 50 days, from Easter Sunday to Pentecost Sunday. The 50 days' period is called Eastertide. St. Paul tells us that Christianity is what it is because of the event of the resurrection. He writes in 1 Corinthians 15:14, "And if Christ has not been raised, then empty too is our preaching, empty too your faith."

At Jesus' crucifixion and death, his mission appeared to have ended up in a failure. But as we read in the gospel of today, "On the first day of the week, Mary of Magdala came to the tomb early in the morning, while it was still dark, and saw the stone removed from the tomb" (John 20:1). An angel of the Lord removed the stone that sealed Jesus' tomb (Matthew 28:2). Jesus was freed from the darkness of the tomb. Jesus' mission came alive again. From a few followers in Israel, Christianity became a world religion that has influenced every aspect of human existence.

St. Paul tells us in the second reading how we can participate in the celebration of the Easter feast, "Clear out the old yeast, so that you may become a fresh batch of dough, inasmuch as you are unleavened. For our paschal lamb, Christ, has been sacrificed. Therefore, let us celebrate the feast, not with the old yeast, the yeast of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (1 Corinthians 5:7-8). No matter how wonderful a baker is, if the baker bakes with bad yeast, the baker's product will be bad. Easter means to bake our lives with new yeast. Then, we rise from the old life of malice and wickedness to new life of sincerity and truth.

Spring has arrived after the harsh winter. After the dryness and withering of winter, vegetation is now wearing a new look. Trees and grass have resurrected and are alive again. We are, therefore, invited to transform from the harsh life of winter to the new life of spring. We are to become what St. Augustine calls "Easter people." He says, "We are Easter people, and Alleluia is our song." Pope St. John Paul II adds, "The joy of Easter should not be a shallow joy, but rather a joy that comes from faith, that grows through unselfish love, that respects the fundamental duty of love of neighbor, without which it would be unbecoming to speak of Joy. ... An Easter person constantly reflects and asks himself or herself two important questions, 'How can I become Jesus to my neighbor?' and 'How can others see Jesus in Me?'"

Jesus' resurrection followed his passion, cross, crucifixion, and death. Therefore, the resurrection story is a story of hope. We are not to give up in times of passions, crosses, crucifixions, and deaths but to look forward to resurrection and glory that follow. May our thorns change to crowns. May our crosses and pains never be in vain. May God send his angels to roll away the stones weighing on us. May we spring forth to new life. We pray with the words of St. Paul: May the Spirit of the one who raised Jesus from the dead give life to our mortal bodies also (Romans 8:11). Amen.

Happy and Spirit-filled Easter to you all!

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