

Homily of Easter Sunday Year B, 2021

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

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 which has influenced every aspect of the world history.

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 bright a light bulb is, if it is buried in the ground, the light is cut off. Easter means to be delivered from the darkness of the tomb so that the light of Christ in us can shine out. 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. The singing of birds shows how excited they are. We are, therefore, invited to transform from the harsh life of winter to new life of spring. We are to become what St. Augustine calls "Easter people."

Pope St. John Paul II delivered the following message in Australia in 1986: "We do not pretend that life is all beauty. We are aware of darkness and sin, of poverty and pain. But we know Jesus has conquered sin and passed through his own pain to the glory of the Resurrection. And we live in the light of his Paschal Mystery – the mystery of his Death and Resurrection. 'We are an Easter People and Alleluia is our song!' We are not looking for 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.' We realize that joy is demanding; it demands unselfishness; it demands a readiness to say with Mary: 'Be it done unto me according to thy word.'"

Indeed, the joy of Easter should not be a "shallow joy." 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. It is often said, "No cross, no crown." Also, "No pain, no gain." May our crosses and pains never be in vain. 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. Amen.

Happy and Spirit-filled Easter to you all!

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