

Homily of Easter Sunday Year C

Easter date is not fixed 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 held on the first Sunday after the first full moon (when night and day are of equal length). This is worked out by ecclesial geographers. Easter is the greatest Christian celebration. Easter season is from Easter Sunday until Pentecost Sunday.

Jesus conquered death by rising from the dead. His resurrection is the hope of our own resurrection. We acknowledge this when we pray the Preface 1 of the Mass of the Dead: "in death, life is changed and not ended." St Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 15:14, "And if Christ has not been raised, then empty too is our preaching, empty too your faith." It is for this reason that we proclaim, "Dying, you destroyed our death; rising, you restored our life; Lord Jesus come in glory." Jesus says, "For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who sees the son and believes in him may have eternal life, and I shall raise him on the last day" (John 6:40).

At his crucifixion and death, the mission of Jesus appeared to have ended up in a failure. Then, suddenly, as we read in the Gospel, "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." 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. Long before his passion, Jesus prophesied, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he may die, he shall live" (John 11:25). Pope Francis re-echoes Jesus' words in his Apostolic Exhortation, *Christus Vivit*, "He is alive and wants you to be alive." Nature celebrates Easter too. The cold winter is gone. The weather is warm and nice. Life is back to vegetation after the scourge of winter. Green leaves are back on grass, shrubs and trees.

Easter means rising from death and tomb to new life in Christ. St. Paul tells us in the second reading, "If then you were raised with Christ, seek what is above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Think of what is above, not what is on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God." Jesus rose from death and from his tomb with a glorious body. Easter, therefore, means rising from inglorious (sin, shame, and loss of honor) to glorious (newness, dignity, and honor).

Last night, we blessed the Paschal candle and lit it from the flame of the sacred fire. The light of the Paschal candle represents the light of Christ who dispels all darkness and lights up the world. Jesus says, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but have the light of life" (John 8:12). Easter means surrendering every cloud of darkness hovering over us to the light of Christ in order to walk in the light of life.

Let us pray with St. Paul, "I want to know him and experience the power of his resurrection" (Philippians 3:10-11). To experience the power of his resurrection means to turn from fear to courage, from anxiety to confidence, and from weakness to power. We may be weighed down by different kinds of stones that keep us in tombs. It may appear as if our mission has failed. But it is by the power of his resurrection that we seek above our failures, think above our failures and rise above our failures.

To know Jesus and experience the power of his resurrection makes us Easter people. As Easter people, we do not stay in hiding. We are to go out to preach and witness our experience of the life and light of Christ to others. As Easter people, we are bearers of the life and light of Christ which we must share with others. Happy and Spirit-filled Easter to you all!

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