

Easter Sunday The Resurrection of the Lord - Share the Good News, sing joyfully, His death is victory

April 4, 2021.

Today we consider the mystery at the heart of the Christian faith. It is simple but extraordinary and powerful. It was so mind-blowing that though Jesus told it would happen, even the disciples and the apostles didn't believe it until they saw him. It shattered all their concepts of life. In the whole history of humanity death was the greatest fear. It was conquered. **"Christ is Risen,"** says it all. We can no longer live the same way now that **death has been defeated in Christ.**

In today's First Reading (Acts 10:34a, 37-43), St. Peter reminds us that the Risen Christ only revealed himself to those who believed in him. Only those who believed in him were then blessed by meeting and eating and drinking with the Risen Lord. He reminds us that **"everyone who believes in him will receive forgiveness of sins through his name"**. On the day of our Baptism we had an encounter with the Risen Lord that transformed us into children pleasing to Our Heavenly Father, and he continues to reveal himself to those who believe in him. An encounter with the Risen Christ in faith is always a salvific and transforming experience.

In today's Second Reading (Colossians 3:1-4) St. Paul reminds us that an outlook of faith keeps our eyes fixed on the things above. When we do that, we know the Risen Christ stands at the right hand of His Father and intercedes for us. If we don't see him it is because our faith is not strong enough and we need to beg for more. Pope Francis describes a certain class of Christians in *Evangelii Gaudium* who seem to live a permanent Lent: they have not had an experience of the Lord and his love, and, therefore, the Gospel brings them no joy. The Resurrection banishes vanity from our lives and changes our perspective.

In today's Gospel account of the Resurrection (John 20:1-18), we encounter Mary Magdalene in an intimate moment of great loss. Three times in these eighteen verses, she grieves: *They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.*, *They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.*, *Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.* We, the readers of John's gospel, who experience the cycle of death and resurrection every year, know that Jesus' body is gone from the tomb because he has resurrected from the dead. But Mary doesn't know that. All this woman wants at this moment is to tend to the body of her murdered, martyred spiritual companion, prophet, and teacher, the man who is so close to God that he can work healing miracles. As a leader of the women who supported Jesus' ministry, Mary Magdalene was devoted to the holy man who had healed her of her demons. She was a female leader, a counterpart of Peter. She witnessed the crucifixion of Christ, and now she is the first witness to his resurrection. Go tell the others, Jesus instructs her, and Mary Magdalene announces to the disciples: **"I have seen the Lord!"** This is the resurrection moment! With these words, we know that Christ has overcome death, that this passing from human life is something different, something unique, miraculous, salvific. Mary has seen God. She has seen her beloved Rabbouni crucified and laid in the grave, and she has seen him risen from the dead as her lord and saviour. It is the ultimate revelation, the experience of Jesus as both human and divine. "I have seen the Lord!" For Mary, as for us, sorrow and joy are integrally linked. At the empty tomb, in the quiet garden, our faith in Jesus is affirmed. We go forward in hope and joy, with purpose, to tell others.

St Philip Neri was known as the Saint of Joy. His antics were legendary. Once four Polish nobles came to visit the "saint." He welcomed them and started reading a book of jokes

to them. Every so often he would stop laughing to remark "You see what wonderful books I have, and what important matters I have read to me!" They went away grumbling about this charlatan who pretended to be a saint. He would also go around Rome with large white shoes on his feet, or dressed in a marten skin cloak, or have his beard shaved off only on one side, or go into the church with a lay brother who had a whisk broom and kept brushing him off, or get a haircut in church while Mass was being sung. When he was being criticized by others for his supposed ignorance, he made sure to mispronounce some Latin words during the Mass while they were present. He once said that **"a cheerful and glad spirit reaches holiness much more quickly than a melancholy spirit."** St Philip Neri was a man who had been surprised by the incredible love of Christ. And he realized that joy was the best response. ***"This is the day the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad!"***

Joy is a fruit of the Holy Spirit, a gift from God. However God will never force joy on us: we have to help prepare the soil of our hearts. So are we alive in Christ with the Risen Lord firmly rooted in our hearts and actions, or are we still living in a selfish manner? Easter has no spiritual significance for us if Christ has emptied his tomb and we still lie in death in our own. **We must die to our pride, selfishness, lust, sloth, greed, jealousy and anger, then we can rise to a life of peace, love and joy.** The Easter Story is the most wonderful and joyful story ever told. And it happens to be true. **Easter is all about newness of life in Christ.** The risen life of Christ is ours for the taking. The power of loving with the very love of God is within us and we can fearlessly stake our lives on it. If we really believe that Jesus died for us and for each person, don't we want to say it out loud? If we really believe that Jesus rose from the dead on Easter, don't we want to tell others? If we really believe that Jesus is alive, and that he wants to fill our lives with healing and freedom and joy, don't we want to pronounce it to the whole world? **Christianity spread because Christians told their story.** In our own time, people will come to find their joy in Christ if we tell our own story about finding that joy. Today's feast provides us with a fresh opportunity of facing ourselves with the issue of our own resurrection. It challenges us to spread the light and the life of the Risen Christ. In the Mass, we participate in the act by which divinity and humanity are reconciled, and we eat the sacrificed Body and drink the poured-out Blood of the Lamb of God. And yes, for many of us who cannot receive the Eucharist sacramentally because of the COVID-19 pandemic, we can still receive it spiritually. By the Eucharist, He wants to be our strength and our joy. Share the Good News, sing joyfully, his death is victory for us all!

Let's take a minute or two to ask him: "What is my story?" And then let's remember one moment when we realized that our lives were different because we know Jesus Christ. Can we share that with someone else? Someone else is waiting to hear that story. Someone else is waiting to experience the joy of Easter.