

Homily of Easter Sunday, Year C, 2025

Acts 10:3, 37-43; Psalm 118:1-2, 16-17, 22-23; 1 Colossians 3:1-4; John 20:1-9

The celebration of the resurrection of the Lord is the greatest Christian celebration because it is the victory over death and the accomplishment of the salvation of humanity. The Easter date is not set as that of Christmas. It was in 325 AD, during the Council of Nicaea, that it was established that Easter is celebrated on the first Sunday after the first full moon, which usually occurs on or after March 21st. Therefore, Easter is celebrated between March 22nd and April 25th. The Vatican has the Vatican Observatory, which provides Easter dates to the world.

Easter is celebrated for 50 days, from Easter Sunday to Pentecost Sunday. The 50 days is called Eastertide.

At Jesus' crucifixion and death, his mission appeared to have ended up in a failure. But as we read in today's 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" (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 with an explosion. From a few followers in Israel, Christianity became a world religion that has influenced every aspect of human existence. At present, out of about 8.2 billion of the world population, Christians are about 2.52 billion. This makes Christianity the largest religious group worldwide. The world population of Catholics is about 1.39 billion.

St. Peter explains what Easter means, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who in his great mercy gave us a new birth to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1 Peter 1:3). Easter means new birth and living hope. 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."

St. Paul tells us in the second reading that the Easter event makes us people who are raised with Christ (Colossians 3:1). Jesus is no longer in the tomb. Let us not remain in the tomb of sin and sorrow. May the angel who removed the stone over the tomb of Jesus visit us and remove every spiritual or physical stone that prevents us from being raised with Christ.

St. Paul encourages us to be transformed by the Easter event to become a people who "think of what is above, not of what is on earth" (Colossians 3:3). This means that we think and act according to what is pleasing to God, as St. Paul states in Philippians 4:8, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.

St. Paul instructs us in the second reading to hide our life with Christ in God (Colossians 3:3). In this world of violence, trials, and temptations, we must hide our lives with Christ in God. To be guided, protected, and defended from the onslaught of this world, the Evil One and his agents, we must hide our life with Christ in God.

Through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, we have 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, especially as Pope Francis calls us to celebrate this year as a year of hope. We are not to give up in times of passions, crosses, crucifixions, and deaths but to look forward with hope to resurrection and glory that follow.

May our pains yield gains. May our thorns lead to crowns. May our crosses bring us victory. May the light of Christ which, we began to celebrate with the Holy Saturday ceremonies, light our way and dispel every force of darkness. We pray with St. Paul that 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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