

4/09/2023. Easter Sunday

ACTS 10:34a, 37-43; COL 3:1-4; JOHN 20:1-9

I wish everyone a Very **Happy Easter**. May the risen Lord bless you today, as well as all those in your family whether they are near to you or far away.

The Greek poet Hesiod, who lived eight centuries before Jesus was born, wrote about this legendary bird phoenix in his poetry. When the bird felt its death was near, it would fly off to Phoenicia, build a nest of aromatic wood and set itself on fire. When the bird was consumed by the flames, a new phoenix sprang forth from the ashes. Thus, the phoenix symbolizes immortality, Resurrection, and life after death.

Jesus gave up His life, and from the grave He was raised to life again on the third day. Every day, like the phoenix, we rise from the ashes of sin and guilt and are refreshed and renewed by our living Lord and Savior with His resurrection and the assurance that He still loves us and will continue to give us the strength we need. Therefore, Easter is the greatest and the most important feast in the Church for two reasons:

1) The Resurrection of Christ is the basis of our Christian Faith. It is the greatest of the miracles, for it proves that Jesus is God. "Jesus is Lord, He is risen!" (Rom 10:9), was the central theme of the kerygma (or "preaching"), of the apostles. 2) Easter is a feast which gives us hope and encouragement in this world of pain, sorrows, and tears. It reminds us that life is worth living. It is our belief in the Real Presence of the Risen Jesus in our souls, in His Church, and in Heaven that gives meaning to our personal as well as our communal prayer, strength to fight against temptations, and freedom from unnecessary worries and fears.

To believe in the message of Easter is not a matter of tombs long ago in Palestine, but having the conviction that it is worthwhile to seek to bring light in darkness, solidarity in prayer in the context of many challenges in our life; oppose lies with truth, to work for justice in the face of human corruption, and to say that death does not have the last word. The disciples went into hiding and even denying all knowledge of Jesus when he was arrested. As a result, they remained prisoners of fear and they had obviously missed the central message of his preaching and teaching.

But the women who were Jesus's disciples teach us that they kept watch that night, together with Mary. And she, the Virgin Mother, helped them not to lose faith and hope. As a result, they did not remain prisoners of fear and sadness, but at the first light of dawn they went out carrying their ointments, their hearts anointed with love. They had kept watch; they went forth and found the tomb open and they entered into the Mystery. The resurrection of Jesus from the dead was a clear wake-up call to his disciples and all the other people who had 'failed to understand the teaching of scripture, that he must rise from the dead' (Jn 20:9). His resurrection challenged them to wake from the sleep of their disbelief and indifference.

May we learn from them to keep watch with God and with Mary our Mother in our present difficult situation so that we too may enter into the Mystery which leads from death to life particularly in the current situation. And we cannot live Easter without entering into the mystery. It is not something intellectual, something we only know or read about. It is more, much more! To enter into the mystery means moving beyond indifference which hold us back, and going out in search of truth, beauty and love. It is seeking a deeper meaning, an answer, and not an easy one, to the questions which challenge our faith, our fidelity and our very existence. We need humility, going beyond our own comfort zone, the humility not to take ourselves so seriously, recognizing who we really are: creatures with strengths and weaknesses, sinners in need of forgiveness.

Many believers in God say that our current crisis of facing Coronavirus, political, social and family issues is a wakeup call to deepen our faith more in God. And today is our day for rejoicing in the risen Christ, for thanking the Father for his love, and for reminding ourselves of that to which we have committed ourselves.

'Life grows by being given away, and it weakens in isolation and comfort. Indeed, those who enjoy life most are those who leave security on side and become excited by the mission of communicating life to others' (Pope Francis). The joy of the resurrection is a joy in giving the life we have received from God. Let us recall that, each time we try to practice Christian charity, mercy and forgiveness and each time we fight against temptations we share in the Resurrection of Jesus.

"Jesus is Lord, He is risen!" Alleluia! Alleluia! Once again on behalf of the staff and every parishioner of Good Shepherd parish community I wish

each one of you Happy Easter and assure our prayers until we meet again.
May almighty God bless you all. **Amen. Alleluia.**