

## **Easter- He is Risen**

The Lord is Risen indeed! Alleluia! Alleluia! 'Alleluia' is one expression that we hear so often during Easter. What does 'Alleluia' mean? It simply means, 'Praise the Lord'! But this praise is also filled with thanksgiving, joy and triumph. 'Alleluia' is an apt expression in the context of what we celebrate during Easter – it is simply to praise the lord for his triumph over death. The Lord is risen indeed! Alleluia! Alleluia!

Easter liturgy though it's long but it leads to the celebration of the Easter mystery. And most importantly let's try to understand what is Easter mean to you and me and the way we look at Easter? Do we see Easter as a mere event or an experience with the Risen Lord?

No one saw Jesus rising from the dead, but from the after-experiences of the event shows that Jesus really rose from the dead. Even for many of the apostles, initially, it was not easy to believe. Belief in resurrection is possible when we can pass from a mere acceptance of the resurrection as an event, to it becoming an experience.

In the Transformation of the Disciples, we remember how the disciples and apostles were simple men and had to hide behind closed doors after the death of Jesus. How did they suddenly come out preaching, even putting their lives at great risk? Acts of the Apostles is full of surprises. And these men were ready even to die for this truth that they proclaimed. There is no doubt that their experience of the Spirit of the Risen Lord, gave them that unshakable courage. Yes! Easter is not a mere event. It was an experience that transformed the Apostles to be strong and powerful.

God did not give up on us; God has never given up on us. God sent the Prophets all of them with just one message: walk away from sin and embrace true life. We heard Isaiah, we heard Baruch, we heard Ezekiel all of them pleading that we return to God.

God still not giving up on us decided to send His Son Jesus Christ. Again, the prophets announced the coming of Christ as God coming to sprinkle clean water on us and change our hearts of stone. Jesus was not born to live, He was born for one

purpose; to die, to reconcile us to God, to free mankind from the grip of death and sin.

We cannot thank God enough who continues to love and live within us through the Sacraments. The Sacraments are the visible signs of an inward grace. Without the sacraments it seems like running the race alone but with sacraments God runs with you and when he runs with you, you will experience your race into a grace.

In Baptism we belong to God's family. In Confirmation, were able to bear witness to God's love and live our faith boldly. In Holy Communion we are nourished with Eternal bread and life. In the Sacrament of Confession, we are forgiven of our sins and are filled with grace. In the Sacrament of Marriage and Holy Order, we are sanctified to live in holiness and service. In anointing of the sick we are healed and are comforted in our dying. In Sacraments, God is with us and we remain with Him.

And to all of us believers, Jesus' Resurrection is central to Christian life. St Paul tells us, "if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain" (1Cor 15:14). Easter is not merely an event but an experience that confirms our belief in Jesus as the Son of God, as it confirmed the belief of the apostles. My dear friends in Christ, so then let this Easter that we celebrate be not just an event, a historical event that happened 2000 years ago, or just a liturgical event. *Let it be an experience for each one of us. Let the risen Lord become real to us.* May we experience the outpouring of his spirit during this season! And this is the foundation of our Christian faith.

On this Easter celebration we also look around us, what do we see? Fear, pain, hunger, hopelessness. People cannot go out of their homes. People cannot even gather to worship in Church or celebrate Easter party. Too many of us focus on sufferings, darkness and deaths, rather than on joy, light and new life. Covid-19 has brought us face-to-face with sufferings and death like never before. How will you and I be '*witness*' of Jesus' resurrection?

In the Resurrection narrative, we hear that the women went to the tomb very early in the morning hoping to anoint the body of Jesus with the spices. They were looking for a dead body but found an Angel who gave them the Good News. Jesus even met them on the way to confirm this great News. Like these women, we often

become completely overwhelmed by the darkness that we only expect the worst to happen; some of us are only expecting more bad news from the pandemic.

These women forgot or perhaps did not believe when Jesus said several times that He would rise again. Seeing Jesus beaten and crucified was a blow too hard to swallow. Like these women, we in this pandemic crisis, are shaken, shuttered and many are broken, but our faith in Jesus, our Risen Lord who conquered death and Risen, assures that we who place our trust and gaze our eyes on Him and believe in Him, will be saved for He will make all things well again.

In the words of Pope Francis, who said in his homily on Palm Sunday, to love and service during covid19, (and I quote his words) *“Do not be afraid to devote your life to God and to others; it pays! For life is a gift we receive only when we give ourselves away, and our deepest joy comes from saying ‘yes’ to love, without ifs and buts. As Jesus did for us”*.

I have also witnessed and was amazed at the faith of many of the patients and their family members, visitors and workers I met at St. Paul's Hospital during this time of crisis, who have expressed concerns but at the same time assured each other in prayers and professed boldly in words that *"God is with us and He will make all things well"*. It is truly a graceful experience for me to witness deep faith during crisis that we all face at this present time.

I would like to quote from Fr. John's Good Friday homily, where he expressed his faith, he said *"Covid 19 or any other crisis is no greater than our Jesus"*. I recalled his concern when masses for public were canceled until further notice, he expressed his feelings to me saying that, *"his heart breaks for not able to celebrate Mass with you, his parishioners, his flocks."* Rest assured that Fr. John, your Pastor, misses you all and he is continuously praying for you and your families.

Thanks to his initiative as a good shepherd, he cares for you and so he has come out with creative ways to stay home and yet stay connected to you through social media and through telephone to offer you comfort and support. While reaching out to you with his prayers and blessings, I hope, you too will keep Fr. John and all the Spiritual leaders, including me, in your prayers.

I would also like to acknowledge Fr. John for his support and encouragement to the frontline workers, especially me, through his committed effort, joining the community every day at 7PM making noise & music using their pots and pans in solidarity and support to all health care practitioners, especially the front liners.

Though you remain homebound, we as one body of Christ in one faith, hope and love, we can boldly confess that we rejoice in Our Risen Lord. The Lord is Risen indeed! Alleluia! Alleluia!

Amidst COVID-19 darkness, we Christians are called to be like this Paschal Candle; to shine goodness, love, compassion, truth, justice and everything Christ would do.

May this pandemic crisis make us creative in opening new ways to love and serve and to live in hope in the Risen Lord who is with us and will deliver us from every evil.

I recall the Christian song and as much as I recall the lyrics go like this *"God is so good and so great and so mighty nothing that God cannot do"*.

I bet you, Fear Not! Live Life Positively. Have Faith. It is well with you. God bless you all.

With my prayers and blessings. Let us rejoice. The Lord is Risen indeed! Alleluia! Alleluia! Amen.

Happy Easter to you all.

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