

Homily for Easter Sunday

Jesus is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia! Today's celebration of the Lord's Resurrection is the most important of all the Christian celebrations. In fact, as someone once wisely said, "There would be no Christmas, if there was no Easter". In other words, there would be no reason to celebrate this man named Jesus if what He said wasn't true. Some people think Jesus is just this great guy – merely a good teacher, who had a lot of nice things to say – and nothing more. But, when it comes to who Jesus is, that's not one of the options. Jesus Christ claimed to be the Son of God, who conquered sin and death and rose from the grave. So the options are either: He was a liar – making all of this up; He was a lunatic – having some kind of complex thinking He really was the savior; or He was absolutely telling the truth about it all. For us as Christians, this last choice is the only choice that could ever be true!

The thing is, many people believe, or at least live their lives as those they believe that Jesus lived, died, and rose again 2,000 years ago. And if we get to heaven someday, we'll see Him again there, since He unlocked the gates of paradise so we could get in. And those statements are not false. But, there's more. That's message of Easter – there's always more!

Just look at our Scripture readings today. From the Acts of the Apostles, we hear St. Peter, who had violently denied Jesus a few days prior, now preaching to all these people, telling them what happened to Jesus, and who He was, and what He did. He tells them, “This man God raised on the third day and granted that he be visible ... to us, the witnesses chosen by God in advance... He commissioned us to preach to the people and testify that he is the one appointed by God as judge of the living and the dead.”

And then in today’s Gospel from Matthew, we heard how an angel appeared first to Mary Magdalene early on that first Easter Sunday, saying, “I know that you are seeking Jesus the crucified. He is not here, for he has been raised just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples, ‘He has been raised from the dead...’” This same Mary Magdalene who previously was a notorious sinner from whom Jesus cast out seven demons the first time He met her!

To say that there’s more means that God wants to change our lives in the here and now. The newness of life that Jesus has won for us through His death and resurrection is not just something we’re waiting for in heaven. It’s something God shares this with us now – already! In other words, we have become a new creation in Christ, starting in baptism. And therefore, our identity is no longer unredeemed sinner, but rather true sons and daughters of God the Father. Therefore, through the Holy Spirit, God wants to enable us – empower us – to live the lives He has made us for. This means, He wants to help us become more and more like Jesus, His only-begotten Son, in the concrete realities of how we live our lives: what we do, and say, and think.

St. Paul puts it this way in our second reading today from 1st Corinthians: “Do you not know that a little yeast leavens all the dough? Clear out the old yeast, so that you may become a fresh batch of dough, inasmuch as you are unleavened.” Now, I’m not a baker, but I know it only takes a little yeast to leaven a whole batch of dough. In other words, a little bit of one thing can cause a huge transformation in something else. So, what is the leaven in your life? Malice and wickedness? Or sincerity and truth?

Today, Easter Sunday, proclaims to us that God wants us to clear out **ALL** the old yeast – all that is not of Him in our lives: bitterness, resentment, selfishness, just to name a few. In this way, we can become a new batch of dough, and let God become the leavener of our lives.

My friends, it is by NO accident that Jesus has left us the Sacrament of His Body and Blood in the holy Eucharist. For, through our reception of Holy Communion, we enter more deeply into His Paschal Mystery, and receive the needed strength in our lives of discipleship as we follow in His footsteps. We truly receive this unleavened bread so that we can ourselves be leavened by it. And having been leavened – ourselves changed and transformed by God – we can then act as His leavening agent for others – for spouses and family members; for co-workers and classmates; and yes, even for strangers and enemies. In this way, we ourselves become modern-day St. Peters and Mary Magdalenes, for every saint has his past, and every sinner has a future!” God bless you.