

Easter Vigil and Easter Sunday 2018 (31/3/18 & 1/4/18)

Jesus is Risen! Alleluia! Because of the Resurrection, life will never be the same again. The whole course of history is changed. Our lives are changed. We once were slaves of sin and ignorance, but now, it doesn't have to be that way anymore!

When Abraham took his only son Isaac to the land of Moriah and nearly sacrificed him, many details prefigured Christ's sacrifice, including Isaac carrying the wood on his shoulders, just as Christ carried the wood of the Cross to Calvary, and the fact that a ram was offered in Isaac's place, just as Christ died in our place for our sins. But there's even more to it than that, because we hear about the blessings God promised in reward for Abraham's obedience: "I will shower blessings on you, I will make your descendants as many as the stars of heaven and the grains of sand on the seashore." As a result of Christ's sacrifice, which He freely offered to the Father, blessings are now showered on us as his descendants in the faith as His adopted sons and daughters through baptism. Through baptism, we have taken part in Christ's death and resurrection. St Paul writes:

"When we were baptised in Christ Jesus we were baptised in his death; in other words, when we were baptised we went into the tomb with him and joined him in death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the Father's glory, we too might live a new life" (Rom 6:3-4).

So the Resurrection doesn't just give us the hope of heaven in the future, but even now promises us new life whilst here on earth, putting away the old life of sin.

With the Resurrection, all has been renewed. Sometimes, in the Gospels, there are little phrases said in passing that are rich in meaning, but we can so easily not notice the significance of them. In St Mark's Gospel, when the women head to the tomb, they are told, "you must go and tell his disciples and Peter". Why does it say, "disciples and Peter"? Well, one layer of meaning is that it is showing that Peter was the one in charge over all the other disciples. But it also shows something else. Peter had denied that he knew Christ three times. He had rejected him, not just under the threat of being ridiculed, but he was probably also afraid for his life. The fact that the women are told, "you must go and tell his disciples and Peter"

tells us that Peter going to be given another chance. He's not going to find that the risen Christ will reject him and put someone else in charge. Yes, Peter still has to acknowledge his fault before Christ, and confess three times, "yes, Lord, you know I love you", in reparation for having denied Him three times. But he is to be forgiven and restored. The Resurrection means new life, not only for Christ, but for all those who have sinned and denied Him in various ways. That forgiveness and that strength is also waiting for us. We just have to go and claim it.

Today/tonight, we celebrate the Mass as part of our celebration of Easter. The Eucharist is itself an Easter sacrament. It draws all its power from Christ's Death and Resurrection. At Holy Communion, it's not the dead Jesus that is offered to us, but the risen Lord. He wants to fill us with His new life as the risen Christ. He wants to transform us to be more like Him in His resurrection. As He says in John chapter six, "As I, who am sent by the living Father, myself draw life from the Father, so whoever eats me will draw life from me" (v. 57). That's why He also warns us, in the same chapter:

"I tell you most solemnly,
if you do not eat the flesh of the Son of Man
and drink his blood,
you will not have life in you" (v.53)

We can run the risk of being dead disciples, with no life. If we don't receive the Lord and go back to the life of sin, then our baptism is in vain. That's why St Paul tells the Corinthians:

"get rid of all the old yeast, and make yourselves into a completely new batch of bread, unleavened as you are meant to be. Christ, our passover, has been sacrificed; let us celebrate the feast, by getting rid of all the old yeast of evil and wickedness, having only the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (1 Cor 5:7-8).

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