

## Easter Sunday A/2011

I want to start this homily with this wonderful Psalm 118 I cherish so much: "This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad". Why shall we be glad? Why shall we rejoice? Just for a day? What does this day have in particular so that we change our mood and be happy?

To these questions, there is only one answer: God has done something extraordinary by raising Jesus from dead. He has given us hope and assurance that, whatever might happen to us and how bad we might have it with human suffering, our destiny is tied to that of Jesus Christ. Our life will never end in death, but rather it will continue beyond physical death in order to find its rest in the heavenly kingdom.

That is what motivated the disciples to stand up and defy the Jewish authorities in speaking in the name of Jesus before the crowd of Jews, as we heard in the first reading. In fact, no one can understand the change in the attitude of the disciples of Jesus who were so afraid and went in hiding as Jesus was arrested, unless something would have happened to him.

Yes, God has vindicated Jesus that the Jews have condemned to death. He has raised him from the dead and has given him the power to appear to his disciples. The disciples are witnesses not only of the things that happened before his death, but also of his resurrection from death.

If it is true that God has done a marvelous thing by raising Jesus from the dead, then, there is a consequence for us who believe in Jesus. As St Paul says, we have to seek what is above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. From now on, our lives are hidden with Christ in God. Because of this relationship, when Christ will appear at the end of time, we will appear with him in glory.

But how did Jesus raise from the tomb? What happened to him on that day? That is what the Gospel of this Sunday describes in the event of the resurrection.

In fact, every one of Jesus' disciples was taken by surprise when that morning they found the tomb empty. Mary Magdalena, who was the first to come to the tomb, could not believe with her eyes: "the stone was removed from the tomb". Taken by emotion, she ran as fast as she could to alert Peter and John who could not help attesting to the truth of what she told them.

When Peter and John saw the empty tomb and the burial cloths trailing on the ground, there was no doubt at all for them: Jesus was risen. From that moment on, they understood that the death of Jesus was not a defeat at all, but rather a victory of life over the negative forces of evil. All the disciples with them came to understand that Jesus was right in everything he said and did.

On that day of the resurrection, everything became clear to the disciples who understood that the passion and the death of Jesus were part of God's plan to give life to the world. Of course, there was the sorrow of Good Friday with its tears and sadness, but that was not an end in itself. In fact, who could resist God's power to give life again? Did not Jesus himself say that whoever believes in him will not die and even if he dies, he will live? Could he really fail to apply that same teaching to his own life?

Not at all; he was right. He was trustworthy and a truthful servant of God. He was not a liar, as the Jews pretended by crucifying him. His teachings and actions came truly from his Father who sent him.

That is why his death on the cross was not a punishment, but rather a gift that the Father gave to the world for the forgiveness of sin. It is for that reason that in the resurrection, God the Father confirms Jesus as the mediator between heaven and earth and the only one in the name of whom salvation is brought to mankind.

For that particular reason, the resurrection of Jesus is the foundation of our faith. If Jesus did not rise from the dead, there would not have been faith in him. Perhaps, people would have talked about him as we do with some important figures in human history like George Washington, Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Nelson Mandela or Chaka Zulu, but that would not have any influence on millions of people in the world as it is today.

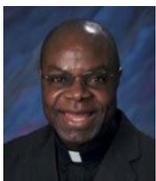
In order to share in the resurrection of Jesus, we need faith. Only faith can help us understand that there is nothing impossible to God. Because nothing is impossible to him, he can raise someone from ashes and cover him with glory. Faith I am talking about is not knowledge of the things about God, but rather trust in God and his word. In fact, faith in the resurrection implies trust, confidence and hope that even in the worst of a dark night, a dawn is possible.

We should never forget that Jesus became a man for our sake. If that is the case, it means also that he is risen for our sake so that we share in his resurrection. That is why his resurrection is our resurrection, as well as he suffered and died for us. He makes us participate in his resurrection.

That is the good news of Easter that makes us all glad. It means that, no matter what we endure in this life, God will not abandon us. He will intervene in our favor because of his faithfulness. At that time, we will understand the truth, namely that we would not have run in vain. We would not have accepted so much sacrifice for the sake of our faith in vain. We would not have lived our Christian commitments with so much courage, determination and abnegation for nothing.

That is why, although we are surrounded with problems everywhere, we are not discouraged. We are strong and want to fight until the end. The risen Christ himself challenges us to trust him in every happening of our life and to hope for our redemption. The resurrection of Jesus reminds us that there is never a Good Friday without Easter. Easter attests to the truth that we will never be abandoned, that nothing is ever hopeless. Happy Easter to all!

**Acts 10, 34a, 37-43; 1 Corinthians 5, 6b-8; John 20, 1-9**



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