

Easter Vigil 2018

Holy Rosary Cathedral

31 March 2018

Christ, Our Light

“Let there be light” (Gen 1:3). At dawn of the first day of the week, “when the Sabbath was over” (Mk 16:1), God once again said what he had spoken on the first day of Creation. The darkness of Gethsemane, the solar eclipse of Jesus’ Passion and Death, the night of the grave had all passed. “In the impenetrable gloom of death Christ came like light – the night became as bright as day and the darkness became as light.”¹ Now it is a first day once again: creation is beginning anew. In solemn silence, Jesus rose from the grave, his body suffused with the pure light of God.

From now on, Christ our Light will dispel “the darkness of our hearts and minds.”² The Risen Lord is God’s new day, the beginning of the new creation for all of us.³ In the Resurrection, life has showed itself to be stronger than death; goodness more powerful than evil; love mightier than hate.

“You are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; he is not here” (Mk 16:6). With these surprising words,

¹ Benedict XVI, Homily, Easter Vigil (7 April 2007).

² Preparation of the Pascal Candle, *Roman Missal*, p.326.

³ Benedict XVI, Homily, Easter Vigil (7 April 2012).

God's messenger, a young man robed in light, spoke to the three bewildered women who had come to properly anoint Jesus' body and had found the stone rolled back and the tomb empty.

The same astonishing announcement of the good news is made to us on "this most sacred night."⁴ Jesus is not a person from the past, nor merely one who is remembered for his preaching and good deeds. "He lives, and he walks before us as one who is alive; he calls us to follow him, the living one, and in this way – by encountering him in an intimate, personal relationship – to discover for ourselves too the path of life."⁵

The Risen Jesus did not return to his former earthly life, as Lazarus had done, but he entered into God's glorious life, "and he entered there with our humanity, opening us to a future of hope."⁶ Jesus did not remain in the grave, because the Son of God could not be held a prisoner of death (cf. Acts 2:24), and no tomb could contain "the living one" (Rev 1:18), who is the source of life itself.⁷

The bodily Resurrection of Christ from the dead is not the fruit of

⁴ Solemn Beginning of the Vigil, *Roman Missal*, p.324,

⁵ Benedict XVI, Homily, Easter Vigil (15 April 2006).

⁶ Francis, *Urbi et Orbi* Message for Easter (1 April 2013).

⁷ Cf. Benedict XVI, *Urbi et Orbi* Message for Easter (16 April 2006).

wishful thinking or an interior mystical experience. It is an event which, while it surpasses history, nevertheless happened at a precise moment and place in human history,⁸ when Pontius Pilate was the Roman governor of Judaea. Now totally transformed, Jesus is free from the barriers and limits of time and space. He is the same yesterday, today and forever (cf. Heb 13:8), the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End.

Tonight, then, we stand before Jesus' empty tomb, and we meditate with wonder and gratitude on his victory in the Resurrection. This stupendous happening is essentially an event of divine love: "the Father's love in handing over his Son for the salvation of the world; the Son's love in abandoning himself to the Father's will for us all; the Spirit's love in raising Jesus from the dead in his transfigured body."⁹

Power of the Resurrection in Daily Life

Christ has truly conquered evil, but it is still up to us to embrace this victory personally. The grace unleashed by the Resurrection, the passage from slavery to evil to the freedom of goodness, must be accomplished in our concrete existence, in our everyday lives.¹⁰

⁸ Cf. Benedict XVI, *Urbi et Orbi* Message for Easter (24 April 2011).

⁹ Benedict XVI, *Urbi et Orbi* Message for Easter (23 March 2008).

¹⁰ Cf. Francis, *Urbi et Orbi* Message for Easter (31 March 2013).

Because of Jesus' Resurrection, we can look with new eyes and a new heart at every event of our lives, even the most negative ones. In its wake, moments of darkness, of failure and even of sin can be transformed. When we have reached the lowest point of our misery and our weakness, the Risen Christ gives us the strength to rise again.¹¹

Our struggles and trials will not magically vanish. They will always be with us in this world. But tonight it is important to let the light of the Risen Lord shine upon our problems. Let us not allow darkness and fear to control us. Instead, let us remember in faith that he is always at our side and will never let us down.¹²

Baptism

Dear elect soon to be baptized: in the sacrament of Baptism, Jesus' Resurrection, his victory over sin and death, will truly be brought about in you. He draws you to his risen life. He is taking you out of the often murky sea of this world, where we are frequently in danger of sinking amidst all its perils. In Baptism, Jesus will take you, as it were, by the hand. He will lead you, like the Israelites of old, along the path that passes through the Red Sea of this life and will introduce you to

¹¹ Cf. Francis, *Regina Caeli* (28 March 2016).

¹² Francis, Homily, Easter Vigil (26 March 2016).

everlasting life.¹³

Baptism, then, is very different from a public act of “joining the Church,” It is also more than a washing away of sin. It is truly your entry into Jesus’ Death and Resurrection, the beginning of a new life.¹⁴ You will become a “new creation” in Christ (cf. 2 Cor 5:17).

The passage from the Letter to the Romans which we have just heard read affirms that in Baptism you are giving yourselves over to Christ. He takes you to himself, so that you will no longer live for yourselves, but through him, with him and in him; and thus for others. In Baptism you are surrendering yourselves to the Risen Lord, placing your lives completely in his steady hands.¹⁵ May you never let go of his grip!

Share the Joy!

Dear brothers and sisters: The joy of knowing that Jesus is alive and with us cannot be contained. We need to “go forth” to proclaim the Resurrection to our families and friends: to share with them that Jesus has conquered death and is calling out to them, especially if they burdened by sadness or are struggling to find meaning in their life. By the example of your life and the power of your words, tell them the good

¹³ Cf. Benedict XVI, Homily, Easter Vigil (22 March 2008).

¹⁴ Cf. Benedict XVI, Homily, Easter Vigil (15 April 2006).

¹⁵ Cf. Benedict XVI, Homily, Easter Vigil (7 April 2007).

news that Jesus Christ wants to take them by the hand, so that they will see that their problems are not the centre of their lives.¹⁶

Conclusion

On this radiant night, together let us invoke the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, whom we invoke in the Easter season as the Queen of Heaven. May she lead us in rejoicing in the good news that Jesus Christ is risen, truly risen and alive in our midst. Alleluia. Alleluia.

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¹⁶ Cf. Francis, Homily, Easter Vigil (26 March 2016).