

Easter - A
Acts 10:34a, 37-43;
Colossians 3:1-4;
Matthew 28:1-10
Little Flower - 3/12/20

Alleluia, alleluia. This is the day the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad today. Alleluia.

My Brothers and Sisters,

The entire parish staff and I want to wish all of you a most blessed and happy Easter. In a special way, we welcome our “visitors” who are watching this Mass.

Today seems unreal and surreal. Today we are surrounded by symbols of life: the Easter candle, symbol of Christ risen, alive, and present, the beautiful flowers, especially the Easter lilies, and the other colorful decorations. However, today our Church is almost empty because of the coronavirus. Nevertheless, as Christians we are united in faith, love, and hope by the Spirit of Jesus living within each one of us.

Today we celebrate Jesus’ resurrection from the dead, his triumph over sin, suffering, sickness, and death. Having been baptized into Christ, having entered more deeply into the mystery of his dying and rising during Lent and Holy Week, we also celebrate our own resurrection to new life with him, our triumph over sin, suffering, sickness, and death.

On the First Sunday of Lent, from the second story of creation, we learned that original sin introduced vulnerability into our lives and relationships. Vulnerability creates fear, and fear paralyzes. Right now most of our fears center around the coronavirus and the collateral damage it is causing. We worry about becoming infected or infecting others. Many people are out of work or fear losing their jobs. We worry about our children who are not able to attend school. We worry about shortages of food and other essential goods. We worry about our own and our families’ and friends’ emotional health and well-being. Many fear death. All of these fears are grounded in reality and, therefore, appropriate.

One author has argued that there are four basic human fears with which we all struggle: the fear of failure, the fear of rejection, the fear of pain, and the ultimate fear, the fear of death. In the Letter to the Hebrews, we are told that Jesus was like us in all things but sin, i.e., that he was tested in every way that we are without sinning [4:15].

Jesus confronted all of these fears during his passion. Jesus came into the world to bring the Good News of salvation to all people, yet his ministry was cut short after just three years. The people to whom he came cried out for his crucifixion. He was abandoned by his closest followers and even betrayed by one of them. He suffered unimaginable pain in the scourging at the pillar, the crowning with thorns, carrying the cross, and then being crucified. That Jesus had these fears, especially the fear of death, is evident in his prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane: “*Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass me by*” [Mt. 26:39]. Ultimately, Jesus was praying for his life.

My brothers and sisters, in his passion, death, and resurrection, Jesus confronted and overcame these four human fears for himself and for us. In the letter to the Hebrews, we read, “*Now since the children share in blood and flesh, he likewise shared in them, that through death he might free those who all their lives were held in slavery by the fear of death*” [2:15]. Rising from the dead, he freed us from sin, suffering, sickness, and death but also freed us from slavery to the fear of failure, rejection, pain, and death. Since we share his resurrected life through our baptism, just as he triumphed over sin suffering, sickness, and death, his resurrection guarantees that we can triumph over sin, suffering, sickness, and death. Just as he overcame the fear of failure, the fear of rejection, the fear of pain, and the fear of death, his resurrection gives us hope and confidence that we can triumph over them as well. Faith in the resurrection of Jesus gives us hope that tomorrow can and will be better than today.

Alleluia, alleluia. This is the day the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad today. Alleluia.