

## EASTER

“Speak, Mary, declaring what sawest thou wayfaring? “The tomb of Christ, Who is living, the glory of Jesus’ resurrection. . . Yea Christ my hope is arisen, to Galilee He goes before you. . .” Christ, indeed, from death is arisen, our new life obtaining. Have mercy, Victor King, ever reigning Amen. Alleluia.

Dearly Beloved, Christ our hope is risen indeed! In this Easter Mass Holy Church sings with unrestrained joy the utter miracle of redemption obtained. Christ, born of the virgin flesh of Mary, once dead upon the cross, is now risen, living. The stupendous combat He waged against Satan and sin has come to its divine conclusion: the prince of this world has been vanquished by the Immortal King of Glory. The sinless Victim supplied by God of Himself in ransom for our sins is risen from the tomb - by His death He has trampled down death. Jesus Christ is truly risen from the grave and lives and reigns in glory with God and the Holy Spirit unto the ages of ages.

This is that joy which fills every man’s heart on this, the Queen of feasts. And yet modern errors demand that we recall the central truth of this great mystery.

The value of this feast – so central to our faith – derives from the fact that Jesus had, many times, given public demonstrations of His divinity through the working of miracles. These signs were intended to strengthen the hearts of those who came to understand Who He truly was, and underpinned the authenticity of the message He had come to deliver. That message is the call to every man that he surrender himself to the loving will of God. Through submission to Him in all things, we will find the only lasting resolution to the crucifixion of this world’s darkness and error.

There are many today who attack not only the historicity of Christ’s miracles, but the power of grace itself. Such denial ends - all too naturally - in vitiating the truth of this, the most stupendous work of Christ: Jesus’ resurrection from the dead. But without the miracles of Our Lord – culminating in Jesus’ resurrection of Himself from the dead – what is left of the real value of His mission to mankind?

The Jewish people had been waiting for a Messiah for centuries. Once He *had* come, the Lord often upbraided His listeners for their superficiality of seeking in Him for a material kingship destined to solve political problems. Have we not returned to this oldest of errors? Jesus always aims to lead His followers into the reality of an interior, spiritual grasp of what His Messiahship really entails.

The Jewish religion was an elaborate complex of laws governing blood sacrifice for sin. No one at that time would fail to understand the relationship between human sin and the sacrifice of blood as its atonement. Despite the errors of the ages, such bloody sacrifice addresses the perennial need for fallen man in returning to the One, True God a divine justice which is His due. Jesus, as Messiah, was born to be God’s own ransom for the whole of mankind. *This* is the central mystery of our Christian faith, celebrated as it is in the liturgy of the Church and clothed with twenty centuries of faith, repentance, art and culture.

This atoning role of Christ was foretold eight centuries prior to His coming by the Prophet Isaiah. As we heard in the readings throughout Passiontide, the great Prophet not only called Israel to repentance, he foretold with uncanny detail the very sufferings of the Redeemer to come:

“In those days,” Isaiah said, “Who hath believed our report? And to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? . . . there is no beauty in Him, nor comeliness . . . and there was no

sightliness, that we should be desirous of Him: despised and the most rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with infirmity; and His look was as it were hidden and despised, whereupon we esteemed Him not. Surely He hath born our infirmities and carried our sorrows: ... But He was wounded for our iniquities, He was bruised for our sins: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and by His bruises we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray, every one hath turned aside into his own way: and the Lord hath laid upon Him the iniquity of us all. He was offered because it was His own will, and He opened not His mouth: He shall be led as a sheep to the slaughter, and shall be dumb as a lamb before His shearer, and He shall not open His mouth. ... He hath done no iniquity, neither was there deceit in His mouth. And the Lord was pleased to bruise Him with infirmity: if He shall lay down His life for sin, He shall see a long-lived seed. ...”

And so, my beloved, our Easter joy is purchased at the price of the Bitter Passion of Our Blessed Lord. This Man of Sorrows, by pure and gratuitous love, is become our full and everlasting hope. We must, therefore, embrace His love - not only with the longing of joy, but with tears of sorrow and repentance for the Father has laid upon Him the iniquity of us all. He, in an obedience of divine Love, has ransomed our souls with the price of His suffering and Blood, by His bitter death upon the wood of the Holy Cross.

This, dear Christian people, is the central mystery of Catholic faith. If we embrace His sacrificial love in the spirit with which it has been offered, we possess the promise of God Himself that in *us* will be found His own “long-lived seed”.

This Lord Jesus is our Christian Passover. He is not merely a great teacher or extraordinary Prophet. He is the true Messiah of Israel, and, though rejected by those to whom He was sent, the fullness of His grace is manifest to one and all by the fact that He Himself, Jesus, God and Man, ***raised Himself from the dead.***

Witness to this shocking transgression of nature’s law was not reserved only to a select few. The Risen Lord openly appeared to many – 500 people on one occasion – demonstrating in the most striking and public way imaginable, that He is ***living***, and that He is ***GOD***.

If this be the case – as the witness of the Church has always told - then the *religion* He teaches is both truly divine and divinely true. Therefore, the world which the Lord convicts of sin is called to conversion to Him, and the practice of His truths without compromise or attenuation.

This is at the heart of the Easter triumph and joy. Ours can not be a hollow imperialism regarding the conduct of others. We are called by faith to bear a “long-lived seed.” In today’s epistle reading St. Paul reminds what Easter love calls from us. In place of dry religious formalism, Christianity demands the truth of an integral moral conduct towards God and neighbor.

“Brethren purge out the old leaven that you may be a new paste as you are unleavened: For Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us Therefore let us feast, not with the old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.”

This new leaven is none other than Christ, our sacrificial victim lived in our daily lives. Risen from the dead and never to die again, He reigns, living and glorious, at the right and of the Father in heaven, ever making intercession for sinners. We, who have been bought at such a price – characterized by complete demerit on our part and infinite, unspeakable love on God’s – we must therefore, exclude from our lives the “old leaven” of sin – forever. In its place must reign Christ, the “unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.” ***Ours must be a loving***

***submission to God in all things, at all times, and in all places.*** This is made possible by the grace of the Paschal Mystery communicated through the sacraments of Holy Church.

This, dearly beloved is the Easter triumph we now express with such unmitigated joy - in the splendor of our worship and the serenity of our souls. Christ, our Passover is sacrificed for us! *Haec dies quam fecit Dominus.* This is the day which the Lord hath made, let us be glad and rejoice in it.

Let us, therefore, through the mystery of the Cross, be faithful to this Paschal mercy. In so doing we may truly celebrate with our lips and through our lives that long-lived seed of redemption offered.

This is the one and perfect mystery which, alone, can gladden this sinful world. Every Sunday reminds us of it; and from Sunday to Sunday, year to year, the Easters of this life lead us towards the blessed day when Christ will come to bring us to the glory of His Father in heaven.

Alleluia. The Lord is risen - He is risen indeed, Alleluia.