

## Homily For Easter

The serpent's bite was a deadly one. The venom had worked its way deep into the heart of the entire human race, doing its gruesome work. The anti-venom was unavailable until He appeared. One drop was all that was needed, so potent was this antidote. Yet it was not like Him to be stingy. He poured out all he had, down to the last drop. The sacrifice of His entire life, poured out at the foot of the cross—this was the Son's answer to the Problem of Sin. Three days later came the Father's answer to the Problem of Death. It was equally extravagant. For Jesus was not simply brought back to life but he passed over, passed through. His resurrection meant that he would no longer be subject to death. Death, as St. Paul said, would have no more power over him. Easter is the greatest and the most important feast in the Church. It marks the birthday of our eternal hope. Jesus lived our human life, knew our human sorrow and pain, and he died our human death. But the power of the love of God transforms our human sorrows, human pain, human death into joy, consolation and life everlasting, in the resurrection of Jesus. And God is still with us, living in our Easter World with us – and will never leave us, even when we experience the bad times of life. People today live lives filled with fear: They fear death, they fear judgment and they fear eternity. Many times we become so focused and consumed with the problems of today that we forget about the promises of God? The Trappist monks in their eternal silence greet one another, when they meet: "*Memento Mori!*" that means, "Remember, you will die!" But on Easter they change this greeting and say: "*Memento Vivere!*" that means "Remember that you will live!"

This day we celebrate because: We do not worship at the tomb of a dead prophet. We do not recite the teachings of a deceased philosopher. We do not praise the name of a lifeless saint. No... we celebrate this day because we serve a Risen Saviour. Christ is Risen... and that is a truth worth celebrating. *There was once a Muslim in Africa who converted to Christianity, much to the dismay of his Muslim community. Some of his friends asked him, 'Why have you become a Christian?' He answered, 'Well, its like this. Suppose you were going down the road and suddenly the road forked in two directions, and you didn't know which way to go, and there at the fork in the road were two men, one dead and one alive--which one would you ask which way to go?'* There are many areas in which we doubt! We doubt that God will meet our needs, we doubt that God hears our prayers, we doubt the promise of His return, we doubt the scriptures and traditions, we doubt the prophecies, we doubt the Church and Its teachings, we doubt the assurance of our salvation. But Jesus can remove that doubt. How did He remove Mary's doubt ? He simply called her name! You may be here today and Jesus is calling your name. If you are lost, he is calling your name, if you have turned away from him, he is calling your name, if you are filled with doubt, he can conquer that doubt! if you are consumed with fear, he can calm that fear! if you are experiencing great sorrow, he can comfort that sorrow! These are just a few things that a risen Saviour can do for you!

*A man tells his wife, Honey, your mum fell down the stairs 15 minutes ago. The wife yells at him, Why are you just telling me now? He said, Because I couldn't stop laughing.* After meeting with the Risen Christ, the apostles could not stop speaking about it. Jesus is Lord; he is risen" (Rom 10: 9) was the central theme of the kerygma (or 'preaching'), of the apostles. When Mary and the other disciples meet with the Risen Christ, they realise that hope is stronger than fear; love is stronger than hate; faith is stronger than doubt – and life is stronger than death. They live reflecting Jesus' Resurrection Light, not dwelling in the darkness of Good Friday. Their eyes have been opened their life, their world – have been changed forever! The power of the love of God brought new life, rising in Jesus from the darkness of death, and Jesus promises new life to all people: New Life that is everlasting. This is the Easter Message.

## SOME NOTES ON EASTER

During a conference on comparative religions, experts from around the world debated, what, if any, belief was unique to the Christian faith.

The debate went on for some time until C.S. Lewis wandered into the room.

“What’s the rumpus about?” he asked, and heard in reply that his colleagues were discussing Christianity’s unique contribution among world religions.

Lewis responded, “Oh, that’s easy. It’s grace.”

The people at the conference had to agree.

The idea of God’s love coming to us free of charge, no strings attached, seems to go against every instinct we have. The Buddhist eight-fold path, the Hindu doctrine of karma, the Jewish covenant, and Muslim code of law---all of these offer a way to earn approval.

Only Christianity shows us that God’s love is unconditional!

We live in a world of ungrace.

A little girl was orphaned when her family was tragically lost. She was placed in a foster home, where unfortunately the couple who was charged with her care was more interested in the check they got, than in the little girl. While they provided for her basic needs, the atmosphere in that house was cold and impersonal, and the little girl was left for hours on end alone in her attic room.

With little to do and no friends, the little girl soon spotted a squirrel in the tree that rose up by the window in her room. Each day she would greet her new friend, and managed to sneak small pieces of bread and fruit from the table to him.

One day, the woman of the house heard the little girl talking. Thinking someone must be in her room, she burst through the door, only to find the little girl at the open window, talking to the squirrel who was perched on a nearby tree limb.

Furious, the woman slammed down the window, and ordered the little girl never to do that again. She left the room and waited on the stair for what she knew would be an angry outburst from the child. Instead, nothing happened.

Peeping through the crack in the door, the woman saw the little girl bent over her desk, writing carefully in large block letters. She watched as the little girl finished her writing, folded the note tightly several times, and then pulled on her coat.

The woman hid in the hall as the little girl made her way from her room, down the stairs, and out the backdoor of the house. Quickly she pulled herself up on a low-hanging limb, and pushed the folded note into a fork on the tree. Then, she came back inside, and went to her room.

The woman had watched the little girl carefully. When her husband got home, she told him the story, and badgered him until he got the step ladder and retrieved the note from the tree branch.

The woman opened the note and to her amazement, read what the little girl had written:

“Whoever finds this, I love you.”

And that's what God has done. Sent Jesus, filled with God's love, sent him ahead of every difficulty we might have in life, sent him into a world that did not receive him, turned on him, and killed him. Sent him to say, "Whoever finds this, I love you."

I wonder if you ever ask yourself the question, "What kind of world is this?" Maybe you ask yourself this question when you experience the breathtaking beauty of the world – perhaps a beautiful spring morning, with new life coming from the earth that seemed so cold and dead over the winter months. "What kind of world is this?" Sadly, this question is probably asked most often when the world can seem most brutal, cruel and sad. When the world is plunged into war; when people suffer from terrible acts of terrorism; when the innocent suffer and die; when we lose someone we love; when we see the tragic effects of natural disaster. Especially at these times, we may ask the question, "What kind of world is this?"

On the day Jesus was tortured, crucified – the day Jesus died on that cross, there seemed to be a simple answer to the question - "What kind of world is this? The answer was, "The kind of world this is, is a 'Good Friday' world." It is a world in which the 'best' is squashed underfoot by the 'worst'; where good is trampled by evil, where hope is torn to shreds by doubt, and where love is killed by hatred.

She meets with the Risen Christ – the first person to see him! Then Mary realises that hope is stronger than fear; love is stronger than hate; faith is stronger than doubt – and life is stronger than death, all because of God's loving, saving work in Jesus! Now Mary too lives in the Easter Day World, rather than just existing in the Good Friday world. She lives reflecting Jesus' Resurrection Light, not dwelling in the darkness of Good Friday. Her eyes have been opened – her life – her world – has been changed forever!

You know, this is the world – the Easter Day World – that Jesus invites us to live in – indeed, Jesus CALLS us to live in – in faith as he calls us to follow him. Certainly, sometimes it is so very difficult to live in the Easter Day World when the sadness, pain and doubt of the Good Friday world threatens to overwhelm us. Sometimes it is so very difficult to live in the Easter Day World when we see so much hatred, war and suffering.

But the Easter message is that we live in the Easter Day World – WE ARE EASTER PEOPLE! God so loved the world that God came to us as one of us in Christ Jesus. He lived our human life, knew our human sorrow and pain, and he died our human death. But the power of the love of God transforms our human sorrows, human pain, human death into joy, consolation and life everlasting, in the resurrection of Jesus. And God is still with us, living in our Easter World with us – and will never leave us, even (especially) when we experience the bad times of life.

The power of the love of God brought new life, rising in Jesus from the darkness of death, and Jesus promises new life to all people: New Life that is everlasting. This is the Easter Message. And what kind of world is this? For us – as Easter People – it is an Easter Day World where the love of God is made real through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead! Thanks be to God. Amen

The train had started moving. It was packed with people of all ages, mostly with the working men and women and young college boys and girls. Near the window seated, was an old man with his 30 year old son. As the train moved by, the son was overwhelmed with joy as he was thrilled with the scenery outside. "See dad, the scenery of green trees moving away is very beautiful." This behaviour from a thirty year old son made the other people feel strange about him. Everyone started murmuring something or other about this son. "This guy seems to be a crack." newly married husband whispered to his wife. Suddenly it started raining. Rain drops fell on the travellers through the opened window. The Thirty year old son, filled with joy "see dad, how beautiful the rain is." the young newly married lady got irritated with the rain drops spoiling her new suit. Her husband said "Can't you see it's raining, you old man? If your son is not feeling well get him soon to a mental asylum and don't disturb public henceforth." The old man hesitated first and then in a low tone replied "We are on the way back from hospital and my son got discharged today morning. He was a blind by birth and last week only he got his vision. These rain and nature are new to his

eyes. Please forgive us for the inconvenience caused.” The things we see may be right from our perspective until we know the truth. But when we know the truth our reaction to that will hurt even us. Let us try to understand the problem better before taking a harsh action.

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