

Easter Sunday 2009

Three days ago, on the evening of Good Friday, we thought that we had witnessed an **apparent failure**.

- ? Not only was the Lord dead and buried, but the Apostles were holed up in a locked room, fearing for their lives.
- ? Where were all the **miracles** now?
- ? What did the Master's beautiful **words** mean now?
- ? It seemed like God had abandoned their cause, exposed it for a **naïve dream**.

But now Easter Sunday has dawned - and with it, **the irreversible victory** of the Resurrection.

- ? The tomb is empty.
- ? The stone is overturned.
- ? The shadow of the cross is dispelled by the bright morning light of a new creation.
- ? Christ's **apparent failure** has blossomed into **victory**, just like the seed that disappears under the ground only to rise up again in fresh, new growth.

That is **the basic pattern of Christian life**, for the Church, for Christian communities, for individuals: apparent failures blossoming into victories; Good Fridays turning into Easter Sundays.

- ? As we follow Christ in our daily lives, he leads us up to the hill of **Calvary**, where we are *invited* to die to ourselves in the painful surrender to God's will - our own Good Fridays.
- ? But, if we follow His lead, that death really just gives God's grace room to work in our lives so that we sprout **new shoots** of wisdom, virtue, and happiness - our own Easter Sundays.

Christian life is an infinite number of **variations** on this one theme, revealed to us by God in Christ: Good Friday - Easter Sunday; Good Friday - Easter Sunday; Good Friday - Easter Sunday.

If we are close to Christ, we must expect to experience our “Good Fridays” – but we do that **KNOWING** that “Easter Sunday” is just around the corner...

- ? When we expect everything to go well and for all to be success, it means we have not learned the fundamental lesson of the gospel.
- ? But on the other hand, when we **accept and adapt to that rhythm of Christian life**, we finally begin to speed forward along the road to wisdom, holiness, and lasting fulfillment.

Today we should **relish** Christ's victory over death, **thank** God for it, and **enjoy** the hope it gives us, the **light** it sheds among us.

But Christ wants us to experience the joy and light of his resurrection **all the time**, not just today.

- ? To do that, we need to help this pattern of Christian life **sink more deeply** into our minds and hearts.
- ? It should become the **default setting** of our expectations: happiness comes from following Christ through the cross into the resurrection.

Optimists tend to forget about the **cross**; **pessimists** tend to forget about the **resurrection**; but God wants to live in the **fullness of the truth**, and today he is giving us the **grace** to do just that.

The fact of the Resurrection is the "**yeast of truth**" that St Paul refers to in the 2nd reading this morning. Our job this Easter Season is to give that yeast room to work.

However, at the same time, we also cannot forget all those sacrifices of this past lent. We all "gave something up" for Lent – why? To give God's grace room to work in our lives, and *slowly*, that discipline has helped us grow closer to Christ.

But let us not forget that the evil one is also at work, trying to *slowly* pull us to his side – to pull us into an evil way of life, to trick us into thinking that "it's not really that bad."

St. Paul reminds us today that "a little yeast leavens all the dough." Anyone who bakes bread knows this. But, conversely, a little poison can go a LONG way. It reminds me of a play I was in while in high school – one of the characters in the play was *slowly* putting arsenic in everyone's food. At first, no one noticed but, over time, the members of the family started to get sick, and eventually die.

The evil has laced our world with arsenic. There are SO MANY THINGS that we are convinced won't really hurt us, or aren't really that bad – but we are slowly poisoning ourselves! Don't be fooled!

All of us here firmly, in some way and shape and form, firmly BELIEVE that Jesus is risen from the dead – that His message is true – that the reward of eternal life is offered to each of us. But, as St. Paul says, we must be careful in this life not to let the devil lace our lives with arsenic ("with the old yeast") – we must be sure to "become a fresh batch of dough – with sincerity, with truth, with what is right and good and true – NOT what is convenient and easy and without any struggle or suffering – or we've fallen back into that same trap – forgetting that our Easter only comes AFTER we've been through our Good Friday.

Filled with the joy of this Easter morning – hearing the call to be the "fresh batch of dough," what will you do to give God's grace **room to work**?

Are you FINALLY ready to get back to Church EVERY Sunday? Are you FINALLY ready to do something to get your marriage blessed in the Church? Are you FINALLY ready to sacrifice

that ONE thing you KNOW is slowly poisoning you (whether that be a thing, a sinful habit, or even a friendship or relationship)? Are you FINALLY ready to allow the victory of Christ's cross and resurrection seep into your life – rather than the arsenic of the devil?

Today we should relish the joy of Easter, thanking God for letting us share in His victory, for giving us hope.

But let's not stop there. Let's not just enjoy Easter, let's allow Easter to **change our lives**.

- ? Christ's resurrection is not just a nice idea; it is the power of eternal life at work in us.
- ? Why not do something for the eight weeks of the Easter season to **plug into that power**?

Why don't we make **an Easter resolution** that will help us do that, that will help us keep in mind the eternal life in Christ that is waiting for us if we stay faithful to him?

It could be something simple:

- ? like inviting a friend or family member who has forgotten about Christ's victory to come to Mass on Sundays and then inviting them over for brunch or lunch.
- ? like watching a classic movie together as a family each Sunday between now and Pentecost - a joyful, uplifting movie
- ? like having a special outing or get-together with friends on Fridays
- ? like taking some time each evening to re-read some of your favorite books, the ones that stir up joy in your soul
- ? Like welcoming back some of our parishioners we haven't seen a while and inviting them to come see our new church at our 50th anniversary celebration the first Sunday in May.

If we ask the Holy Spirit to give us some other ideas, he won't be stingy. He just needs us to decide to let Easter make a difference in our lives, the way it should.

Our souls need **that** as much as they needed the time of **penance and contrition** that we lived during Lent.

The Church is a **wise mother** in giving us **six** weeks of Lent and **eight** weeks of Easter.

Today, as we receive the risen Lord in the Eucharist, let's promise him that we will find a way to plug in to His victory – to become the “fresh batch of dough” – not giving in to the “old yeast” – the arsenic of the devil – but, that we will joyfully respond to Jesus' invitation to follow Him (through Good Friday to Easter Sunday). Let's thank Him, and promise that, **THIS** Easter, we'll do something specific to give His grace room to work in our lives.