

Easter Sunday
4/12/20

WE MUST CELEBRATE

Probably the most famous, the longest and one of the most moving of all Jesus' parables is that of the Prodigal Son. Some people find it touching and comforting and others to be honest, find it rather disturbing. It has captured the imagination of artists through the centuries including even Rembrandt. Now you may be wondering, what does any of this have to do with the resurrection of Jesus.

Well tucked away in that parable, is one of the most beautiful lines of the Bible: *We must celebrate and rejoice, because your brother was dead and has come to life again* (Luke 5:32). The father in that parable doesn't say we can celebrate or we ought to celebrate but rather, *We must celebrate and rejoice*. And then he explains why: *because your brother was dead and has come to life again*.

And those words apply today as well. We must celebrate and rejoice. We celebrate because in Jesus, God takes on human life to share with us and by becoming human and Jesus who is our Lord, our king, our redeemer, our savior, is also our brother.

Jesus is a brother who not only shares life with us but who also dies for us and then rises from the dead. He overcomes death with death. Truly human he really dies and truly God, he really rises from the dead. This wondrous love of God empties the tomb of Jesus transforming it into the womb of new life. Now the younger son in the parable was morally dead because of sin while Jesus was without sin but Jesus truly died taking on the sins of us all and rose to new life.

And so we must celebrate and rejoice because Jesus our brother was dead and has come to life again.

Even when we cannot gather together at Mass as God's family. Even when we cannot gather later in the day to celebrate with our own family and friends, we must celebrate and rejoice. Even in the midst of fear and uncertainty, even in the midst of cabin fever and sudden homeschooling, we must celebrate and rejoice. Even amid a worldwide health crisis, we must celebrate and rejoice. We could even say that in spite of all these things, we celebrate and rejoice because now we know that death doesn't have the last word.

Mary Magdalen, Peter, the disciple Jesus loved and the others were not anxiously waiting for the resurrection. They had forgotten it and were filled with

grief. And today reminds that in difficult moments, even in moments of sorrow and grief: *Don't forget the resurrection.*

The Resurrection of Jesus is about hope or it's about nothing at all. It's about hope in new life, the hope that flows from our baptism. St. Paul tells us that when we're baptized into Christ Jesus, we baptized into his death so that we may share in his resurrection (cf. Romans 6:3ff). In other words, through our baptism, we share in the dying and rising of Jesus. We are grafted onto his Paschal Mystery that moves from life through death and into new life. Sacramentally, we share in what Jesus did but we experience the reality. It's like we ride on the back of Jesus as he is crossing a stream. We don't get wet as he does but he gets us to the other side.

And so on this day, we renew our own baptismal promises remembering that we share in Jesus' death *and* resurrection. We realize that for those who persevere in that grace, the love of God which emptied the tomb of Jesus, will empty our tombs transforming them into wombs of new life.

The mission of the Church continues even now in these troubled times. And this mission isn't just carried on by priests, deacons, and church employees. It's carried on by all of us together as members of the body of Christ. When you're patient with family members, when you offer up your loneliness, when you reach out to the poor and those in need, when you continue to pray and to love and serve, when you're faithful to duties of your state in life, you continue the work of the church. When you do good with great love in big ways or in *every little way*, you continue the mission of the Church. Pandemic or not, the mission of the Church must continue and it does continue, through each and everyone of us.

And as members of St. Therese Parish, we have another reason to celebrate. It was on Easter Sunday 1950, in what was then Leland Funeral Home in downtown Parkville, that the first Mass of St. Therese Parish was celebrated. Today is our seventieth birthday which gives us even more reason to celebrate. About 75 people attended that first Mass, and at least one of those people is still with us here. I don't know the numbers but I like to think that every year since then, more and more people have attended Mass here each Easter...until this year. But nevertheless we move forward remaining united to each other even when we are physically apart. As we enter into our eighth decade as a parish, the mission of the Church continues and the message remains the same as it was seventy years ago: *The Lord is Risen.*

And so we're a people of hope. It's not today but the day will come when we will be able to go out again and be with family; when we will be able to go out for dinner and to attend sporting and entertainment events and when we will be able to travel and embrace one another. More importantly, the day will when we will be able

to gather together as God's people around this altar to listen to the word of God, to share in the gift that Jesus makes of himself to us under the form of bread and wine and to share with God and each other a more complete, common union, a communion. That day isn't today and it won't be tomorrow but that day will come. We don't know when but that day will come.

And until then, with the strength that flows from the glory of the risen Lord, we face each day with faith, with courage and with as much enthusiasm as we can reasonably muster up. We must celebrate and rejoice because our brother was dead and has come to life again and he calls us to share in his new life. With generous hearts and lives of intentional faith, may we, wherever we may be, always answer that call.