

Sunday April 17, 2022
Easter Sunday
Parishioner Reflection

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Easter is not just a Sunday

“Destroy this Temple, and in three days I will raise it up” (John 2:19). These are the words Jesus used to prophesy His own Passion, Death and Resurrection. He was, at the same time, proclaiming that He would bring about the miracle of the Resurrection by His own power. A miracle unrivalled in all of history. As recorded in the Old Testament, the Gospel, and Acts, others had been raised from the dead, but not by their own power. Fr. Ferdinand Pratt, a Jesuit priest in the early 20th Century, writing on the teachings of St. Paul, succinctly summed it up: “If there is no Resurrection, then Christianity is a lie”. We are not just talking about a spiritual resurrection; the Resurrection that we believe in, as Christians, is a resurrection of the body of Jesus - His glorified human body coming back from the dead.

We have made it through Lent and Holy Week to Easter Sunday. The term “Holy Week” was first coined in the 4th Century; prior to that, the early Christians called it The Great Week. This was because God was seen to do great things during this week and, traditionally, each day was given a significant name: Long Monday, Sorrowful Tuesday, Spy Wednesday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Holy Saturday. In the Church liturgies this week, we have been remembering prayerfully the betrayal, agony, torture, unjust trial, passion and death of Jesus.

In John’s gospel this Easter Sunday, when Mary Magdalene goes to the tomb out of love in search of Jesus, it is His dead body she thinks she is going to encounter. Significantly, the evangelist tells us she starts out in darkness - very early in the morning - symbolizing the spiritual darkness that also surrounds her. Mary Magdalene didn’t know she was going to encounter the living Christ; she didn’t know she would hear his voice again. Each Sunday, we imitate the actions of Mary Magdalene. The early Christians attended Mass at dawn, so they too would set out in darkness. Whatever time we go to Mass, we too are going in search of the light in the midst of our spiritual darkness. We are going out of love in search of Jesus, to encounter the risen Lord and receive the Eucharist. The Eucharist is the body of the risen lord, His body, blood, soul and divinity. In a way, as the early Christians used to say, every Sunday is a Little Easter. The big difference is that Mary Magdalene didn’t know she was going to

encounter the living Christ, we do! Mary Magdalene didn't know she would ever hear her teacher's voice again, we do!

Some commentators highlight the fact that Jesus chose to appear to Mary Magdalene first, after his Resurrection, as opposed to his disciples. They speculate as to the various reasons for this. Could one of the reasons be that she stood by Him at the Crucifixion, just like Our Lady, a model of humility and constancy?

The Magisterium of the Church teaches that we are all part of one mystical body, and Jesus Christ is the head of that body. An aspect of Jesus' Resurrection is that it's a bodily resurrection, it is total victory over his own death. And, importantly, in claiming victory over His own death, He also claimed victory over our death as well. "Oh death where is thy sting? Oh grave where is thy victory?" (1 Corinthians). We may be very convinced and perfectly clear in our minds about Jesus' own bodily resurrection on the third day; but when it comes to our own bodily resurrection, are we a little wishy washy? One of the articles of our faith, as set out in the creed at Mass, is belief in "the resurrection of the body". In other words, all our souls will one day be reunited with our bodies. In fact, in the Nicene Creed we profess to "look forward to the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come". Eternal life is not just the immortality of the soul - it consists in the reunification of the body and the soul in a new "restored creation".

So let's bring it back to Easter Sunday. Easter Sunday is just the beginning of a very special season in the Church. For Catholics, Easter is definitely not just one day. The Easter Season is seven weeks long and culminates in the pivotal Feast of Pentecost. The readings at Mass during the Easter Season, (only from the Acts of the Apostles, the letters of Peter and James, and the gospel of John), focus heavily on the spread of the gospel after the Resurrection, the mission of the Church, and the message of Jesus Christ. As part of the mystical body of Christ, we might strive to do the same. In this Easter Season - for the next 50 days - we could challenge ourselves to focus on the mission and message of Jesus and His Church, spreading His gospel of love by putting our faith into practice. Perhaps we look around this Easter Season and finding someone who's sick, poor, dejected, struggling, or lonely, we help them, serve them, and pray for them. This is the season of hope and a time to "exaggerate our love" for others, as St. Peter Eymard put it. This Easter Season could really make a difference once and for all. "We must not fail to help our neighbours because, in them, we serve Jesus": St. Rose of Lima

Sources used in preparation for this Reflection: Dr. Brant Pitre; Msgr. Joao S. Cla Dias, EP; Fr. Geoffrey Plant; The Little Black Book, Saginaw, Michigan

