

Easter Sunday
March 27, 2015

Rejoice and be glad, O Virgin Mary, Alleluia!
For the Lord is truly risen. Alleluia!

These are words from the Marian Antiphon, the *Regina Caeli*, which we pray during Eastertide (and which will replace the singing of the Angelus at the end of Mass). Although the scriptures tell us that Our Lord first appeared to St. Mary Magdalene after His glorious resurrection, there is a very ancient tradition among some of the Church Fathers and the Saints that Our Lord first appeared to His Mother. Drawing on this tradition, Pope St. Paul II explained: *The unique and special nature of the presence of the [Blessed] Virgin at Calvary and her perfect union with the Son in his suffering on the Cross, seem to postulate a very particular participation on her part in the mystery of the Resurrection. [The Mother of God] was probably also a privileged witness to the Resurrection of Christ, in this way completing her participation in all the essential moments of the paschal mystery. Embracing the risen Jesus, Mary is, in addition, a sign and anticipation of humanity, which hopes to reach its fulfillment in the resurrection of the dead.* (Audience, 21 May 1997).

On this holiest of days, we celebrate the Resurrection of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the crowning truth of our faith in Christ. We do so in union with Our Lady, as at every Mass. Our solemn celebration of Paschal Triduum began on Holy Thursday with the evening Mass of the Lord's Supper during which we contemplated the gift and mystery of the Holy Eucharist. During these three days we have commemorated the Easter mystery in all its depth and detail. We know however, that each time we participate in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass the fullness of Good Friday, Easter and Pentecost is conveyed to us. Each time we participate in the sacred mysteries, the *Pascha Domini* (the Passover of the Lord), we die with Christ, we rise with Him and receive from Him the Spirit of Promise who transforms us and unites us to the Father in and through Christ (Fr. M. Louis Merton, *Seasons of Celebration*). The Mass is the Paschal Mystery. So we always celebrate the Mass, any Mass *with the unleavened bread of purity and truth*; that is to say, with faith and devotion, reverence, gratitude and love.

Today's Mass, solemnly and joyfully celebrated is like every other Mass and yet, it is different in one unique and absolutely critical aspect. At every Mass, in the offering of the Sacrifice, the action of Christ makes present offering of Christ our Saviour on the Altar of the Cross. The unbroken, orthodox tradition of the Church does not deviate from the affirmation of this truth. At every Mass we are physically at the foot of the Cross with Our Lady; and our Lord provides everyone who loves Him with an opportunity to be with Him on Calvary. In the Mass, in every Mass we are present with our Lady and our Lord's most faithful followers in the one offering made for the world's salvation. Our Lord Himself had prophesied: *And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself* (Jn. 12:32). In Himself our Lord brings to perfection all mysteries, so that there is one sacrifice and also one kingdom gathered from all peoples (Cf. Pope St. Leo the Great, *Sermo 8 de Passione Domini*). Through the ages, ours included, this prophecy continues to be fulfilled. This is the cosmic breadth of the Eucharistic Sacrifice. Christ our Lord is the King of the Universe and the universality of His

kingship is evident through His Real Presence in all the Tabernacles throughout the world. Yet, as vast as this is, there is an intimate and personal quality to this Sacrifice and Presence. In the intimacy of our personal prayer and in the reception of Holy Communion Our Lord gives to each one of us the privilege of being united with Him in His offering to the Father. He gives to each of us the opportunity to adore and to thank Him for the gift of our salvation; and so our participation in this Mystery, like that of Our Lady, is also *very particular* because it is intimately personal to each one of us.

In a few moments we will all renew our baptismal promises. This is how today's Mass is different. Our response of faith will be very personal, *I do*. Our Lenten penance and sacrifices have been a preparation for this moment of renewed commitment which though intimately personal, is strengthened by the witness and efforts of our parish community and of Catholics throughout the world. Our individual response will echo the words of Our Lady at the Annunciation: *Behold the servant of the Lord; be it done unto me according to thy word*. Today we renew our commitment to walk the path of devout humility in imitation of Our Lord and Our Lady. The renewal of our spirits in the ever-present grace of the Resurrection assures us of a continual renewal of our lives, provided we endeavor truly *to be in Christ* with integrity, and a humble commitment to a life of Christian discipleship. Authentic Christian life means a life of intense charity and self-giving both in prayer and good works. Authentic Christian life is a Eucharistic life because the Eucharist makes present God's love poured out for us on the Cross and the victory of life over death and of love over hatred.

As we begin the fifty days of Easter, may our celebration of the Paschal mysteries make us always conscious of the power of Christ's resurrection at work in our lives. It is by this power that we also will overcome the darkness of death. All that we are and all that we become in life does not end with the darkness of the grave. Our Saviour has done away with death and so we rejoice in the knowledge that *we will also live with him*. (Rom. 6:8). In union with Our Lady, our Mother and Model in discipleship we rejoice in the truth of the resurrection and we endeavour to live by the radiance of this truth.

To all of you, a Blessed and Happy Easter!

Rejoice and be glad. Alleluia!

For the Lord is truly risen. Alleluia