

Easter Sunday
April 6, 2015

Christ our Passover has been sacrificed, alleluia; therefore let us keep the feast with the unleavened bread of purity and truth, alleluia, alleluia (Communion Antiphon, Easter Sunday, *The Roman Missal*).

On this holiest of days, we celebrate the Resurrection of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the crowning truth of our faith in Christ. 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 in which Jesus gives Himself to us and remains with us in the most Blessed Sacrament of the Altar. 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 must 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 and our Lord provides everyone who loves Him with an opportunity to be with Him on Calvary. The Psalmist prophesies of the Lord in His Passion: *I looked for pity, but there was none; and for comforters but I found none. They gave me poison for food, and for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink* (Ps. 69:20-21). 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. The Risen lord is physical here in our Tabernacle. There is a beautiful antiphon composed by St. Thomas Aquinas which expresses the profound mystery that takes place in the Eucharistic miracle of the Mass: *O Sacred Banquet in which Christ is received: the memory of His Passion is recalled; the mind is filled with grace, and a pledge of future glory to us is given. Alleluia!* Yes, this takes place at every Mass. Our Lord gives to each one of us the privilege of being united with Him in His offering to the Father. He gives us the opportunity to adore and thank Him for the gift of salvation; and in turn, transformed into His very likeness we proclaim the joy of the Gospel, the joy of salvation to the whole world.

How is this Mass different? In a few moments we will all renew our baptismal promises. Our Lenten penance and sacrifices have been a preparation for this moment of renewed commitment. For some of us, long ago, the waters of baptism were poured upon us. As these living waters were poured, God poured Himself into our souls. Our hearts tell us that it is only in pouring ourselves out for others, our families, our loved ones, and even the least of our brothers and sisters that we are truly fulfilled. Today, all of us, young and old, renew our baptismal promises, certain in the knowledge that *to be in Christ is to be anew creation* (2 Cor. 5:17). 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.

Our Baptism unites us to Christ our Lord and we are constituted as *a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people God has made His own*; and because of this we have a mission to fulfill. *This messianic people...though it does not in fact embrace all mankind and often seems to be a tiny flock, is yet the enduring source of unity, hope and salvation for the whole human race. It is established by Christ as a communion of life, of love and of truth; it is also used by Him as an instrument for the redemption of all, and is sent out into the whole world as the light of the world and the salt of the earth* (*Lumen Gentium*, 9).

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. May this power raise us up spiritually. May it lead us to pour ourselves out in love, in service; generously and in humility. This alone is a life worthy of God, who calls into His kingdom and glory (*1Thes. 2:12*). It is no less God's own life. May our lives truly be *hidden with Christ in God* (Col. 3:3).

To all of you, a Blessed and Happy Easter!