

Reflection : Easter Sunday 2021

The Easter liturgy celebration invites us to the height of our faith tradition and worship. We celebrate the resurrection of Christ. Christ's victory over sin and death. In the Easter mystery, we celebrate the faith in the power of God that saves, transforms darkness into light, sin to salvation and death to life. On the day after the Sabbath, the women went to the tomb, expecting to find darkness and death, instead, they encountered an angel who announced he has been raised (MK16:6) God would not allow his holy one to experience death or corruption. We celebrate the Lord because he is good, his love spans from one generation to the next, and his mercy has no end.

In the paschal mystery, the eschatological perspective, the perspective of life in God is opened to man. Humanity has access to God; the prospect of a new dawn is open before man. God is doing a new thing in Christ, a new life of limitless possibilities, opportunities and relationship with God and man; the past, the present and the future with God. As Pope Saint John Paul 11 would say, "All that is born of God wins the world; and this victory, our faith" (1 Jn 5:4).

Faith in the resurrection is not about a show of proof and facts of the risen Christ. Even the Apostles did not understand that the Christ was to suffer and die and be raised on the third day even after some predictions by Jesus during the time of his ministry with them. They were slow to believe and Jesus scolded them for their lack of faith.

In the course of his 'messianic activities, Jesus made many signs and miracles; the last—the Resurrection—is the greatest and also definitive' (John Paul 11 Homily 1988). The Easter proclamation declares thus: O happy guilt, O happy fall, and O happy sin; for then we experience redemption. Our redemption is not a reward we deserve for being good. It is God's free gift, God's amazing grace. Jesus Christ has won salvation for us so that we might indeed 'live in newness of life' (RM 6:4). St Paul reminds us that, there is justification through faith in Christ; since "all have sinned and are deprived of the glory of God. They are justified freely by his grace through the redemption in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as an expiation, through faith, by his blood, to prove his righteousness because of the forgiveness of sins previously committed, through the forbearance of God—to prove his righteousness in the present time, that he might be righteous and justify the one who has faith in Jesus" (RM 3, 23-26).

As we celebrate the central doctrine of our faith, the core foundation of our faith tradition, let us open up our hearts and souls to the flame of faith poured out for us in Christ, the Son of God who died to save us from our sins. Let us thank God for his mercy. Moreover, let us recognize that to believe in the risen Lord means more than just accenting to a set of truths or doctrine but more importantly, 'a way of being known. To have faith is to allow oneself to be overwhelmed by the power of God, to permit the divine energy to reign at all levels of one's being. It is about surrendering to God who wants to become incarnate in us. According to Paul Tillich, 'faith is being grasped by ultimate concern, permitting oneself to be shaken and turned by the in-breaking of God. We must let go our ego and free ourselves and let in the power of God in our lives'.

As we celebrate this great season of faith and witnessing, let us open up our lives to the spirit and the grace of Easter, which manifests in the power of love, the power of forgiveness and mercy, and the force of goodness – the Power of God. The power of God can accomplish great and unimaginable goodness in the world. God can and wants to use us as his instruments and channels of his grace and mercy in the world. Imagine if we can and are willing to put to use the Easter spirit / grace, we can truly change the world, and make it come alive with God's power. The power and energy that will inspire motivate and create values of love, kindness, generosity, forgiveness, mercy, making the world a better place for all; and bring about the in-breaking of the reign of God – the reign of justice and peace for all. To conquer evil and the forces of darkness in our lives and in the world, we need must embrace the Easter spirit and grace. Jesus trusted in God, and was obedient and faithful to God's promise. And God saved him, and raised him from dead. We too can overcome our weaknesses if we embrace patience, tolerance, love faith and hope in God. We can overcome bigotry, systemic racism, prejudice, and even failures if we are committed to the forces of goodness and love, the spirit and grace of Easter.

May the risen Lord endow us with his grace to live as Easter People, and may the Virgin Mother of the risen Lord intercede for us to live the new life of Easter witness, to the glory of God.

Rev Noel Effiong, MSP