April 9, 2023—The Resurrection of the Lord—Easter Sunday

Alleluia! The Lord is risen as He said! A great angel spoke those words to Mary Magdalene and the other women, as he sat upon the empty tomb. We have been preparing for this day through the season of Lent by prayer, penance and deeds of charity. It has always been the case, but even more so now, that the pleasures and the things and the busy-ness of life cause us to lose direction and turn away from the real purpose of our lives; it is so easy to simply forget God and heaven. Lent refocuses us and causes us to see life and this celebration of the resurrection of the Lord with renewed faith and hope.

After the Fall of Adam, God wanted to reconcile us with Himself; He wanted to restore the Friendship that He once had with Adam and Eve. He did this gradually throughout salvation history with various covenants, which are sacred family bonds that united His Chosen people with Himself. The most significant was the Covenant with Moses. Through many miracles, God freed His people from slavery in Egypt, so that they could receive the 10 Commandments, worship Him rightly and eventually come to live in the Promised Land, which He originally gave to Abraham.

All the sacrifices of animals and people and covenants of the Old Testament were preparing the way for the “**new and eternal covenant**” in the Blood of Christ. Psalm 118, the Responsorial Psalm for this Holy Mass is the Easter Psalm. We only have a part of it, but a significant verse is: “**The stone which the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. By the Lord has this been done; it is wonderful in our eyes**.”

In ancient times, a builder had to be careful about which stones to choose if he wanted the building to have a firm foundation. The cornerstone was particularly important because it would be the stone that ensured the building would be square and level—all the measurements would be in reference to it. The psalm speaks about a stone that the builders didn’t accept as fitting but, despite that, it became that most important stone of all, the cornerstone.

Jesus is **“the stone rejected by the builders**”. The leaders of His own people refused to recognize Him as the Son of God, the Savior sent to redeem the world. Of course, we can’t just blame His death on the leaders of the Jews of His time; we are all responsible for His suffering and death because of the sins that each one of us commits on a daily basis.

Despite the rejection of Jesus as Savior, God made Him the cornerstone of our salvation. It took the infinite Person of God the Son to make up for all the sins of the world, for not even all of humanity could possibly make atonement; for the offense was an infinite offense, since it was against the infinite God. But He also had to represent us for we are responsible, so the Son of God took on our human flesh and offered Himself as the God-man to pay back the debt of sin to His eternal Father. Psalm 118 said, “**By the Lord has this been done, it is wonderful in our eyes**.” To understand the greatness of Good Friday and Easter Sunday, we must take Jesus’ sacrifice personally. He didn’t just offer Himself for humanity, He offered Himself for you! Jesus wanted you to be free from sin and He wanted you to live the life of grace as the son or daughter that you are meant to be.

God didn’t want these great events of our salvation to be things of the past. That is one of the reasons He instituted the 7 sacraments. The sacraments are the channels of the infinite grace and mercy that flows from Jesus’ sacrifice on the Cross into each one of our lives. They touch our lives from birth, with baptism, until death, with the Anointing of the Sick and every moment in between.

St. Paul points out the connection between the death and resurrection of Jesus and what happens to us in Baptism: “**Are you unaware that we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might live in newness of life**.” We die to sin in the water of baptism and rise to the life of sanctifying grace.

The Easter Vigil is the principal time for adults to receive what we call the Easter Sacraments: Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Communion. Courtney Smith decided after prayer and study of our Catholic faith to be baptized and confirmed and receive her first Holy Communion; Paige Compton and Tyler Richie were previously baptized but now want to commit themselves to Christ and be received into the Church, confirmed and make their first Holy Communion. We rejoice to have them as the newest member of our Catholic family.

On Easter Morning, none of the disciples were expecting the resurrection of Jesus. It had been so devastating that even His predictions of resurrection were forgotten. Mary Magdalene and the other women went to the tomb of Jesus to anoint a dead body. The apostles were in dismay and fear as they gathered in the Upper Room of the Last Supper. The other disciples of Jesus were demoralized; that night, two walked to their village of Emmaus in sadness. That is the way we feel when God is absent from our lives. So many are sad and isolated and lost because they have forgotten God. But it doesn’t have to be that way.

On the first Easter day, the apostles and disciples were overjoyed to find that Jesus was not dead, but alive. The tomb was empty. He had won victory over sin and death. His death and resurrection brought them new life. Jesus wants to renew our faith and to enkindle faith and hope in every soul so they can turn from sadness to joy. Alleluia, the Lord is risen as He said!