

Homily for Easter Vigil and Easter Sunday.

In Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians, he says this:

"...and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is vain; you are still in your sins...If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are the most pitiable people of all."

[1 Cor 15:17, 19]

Ours is an historical faith. The Easter Proclamation of Christ's Resurrection is the truth, the fact, upon which our faith is based. This is the case today as much as it was when Paul was writing. Something new happened around the year 33AD. Jesus was not cured, not reanimated – but Resurrected. Sin and Death do not have the last say anymore.

And in Christ, we walk in a new life. The world is now a place we navigate as a pilgrim people. Our hope is in something even greater than this universe God has given us. Our hope is in the Creator Himself.

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Because we are still in the world, we still have to live through struggles here. We ache for more.

During this Stay-Safe-At-Home period in our culture – I am very aware at each daily Mass I say that I am blessed to have what you all ache for - Communion. You ache for Church, you ache for Confession and the Blessed Sacrament. And many of you are aching for your Baptism and Confirmation, or the Baptism of your children, or your own First Communion.

What do we do with that ache on this great day of Resurrection?

One thing is to look at the Our Lord's Resurrection appearances. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John all record Mary Magdalene as one of the first witnesses to the Resurrection.

Easter Sunday morning, we hear from John's account how she told Peter and John that the tomb was empty. They then looked themselves. The reading ends there. But in the Gospel of John we can read further. Mary stays and weeps by the tomb. And Christ comes to her.

Pope Saint Gregory the Great, who lived in the five hundreds, reflected on this passage in this way:

We should reflect on Mary's attitude and the great love she felt for Christ; for though the disciples had left the tomb, she remained. She was still seeking the one she had not found, and while she sought she wept; burning with the fire of love, she longed for him who she thought had been taken away. And so it happened that the woman who stayed behind to seek Christ was the only one to see him. For perseverance is essential to any good deed, as the voice of truth tells us: "Whoever perseveres to the end will be saved."

At first she sought but did not find, but when she persevered it happened that she found what she was looking for. When our desires are not satisfied, they grow stronger, and becoming stronger they take hold of their object. Holy desires likewise grow with anticipation, and if they do not grow they are not really desires. Anyone who succeeds in attaining the truth has burned with such a great love.

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I think this is one point we can remember in this Easter. We can let our desire grow. We can grow in our desire for Communion and the Easter Sacraments. We can let our hearts expand, ready to be filled to greater capacity when He pours His grace into us. For He does come to us. The tomb is empty, He is Risen.

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