

Fr Dispin John Homily Easter Mass 11/12 April 2020

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People would often comment around this time of the year that the Holy Week is the most demanding week for priests as we have three ceremonies in three consecutive days, and that means three new homilies, if there is anything new in it.

But I must confess that I enjoy the Holy week celebrations as these celebrations bring out in totality our whole faith journey into completion, a sense of joy. It must be the Easter joy. Alleluia. But I must say that this particular week, Holy Week, has been one of the toughest in my life because I do not have your physical presence in this very place. We can't embrace each other and greet each other with the joy of Christ. We can't share Easter eggs. How sad. But we still greet each other through this holy mass. Alleluia. The Lord is risen.

But this year, I must say, Easter happened to me at least on Holy Thursday. I'll go back a little bit, one day before. On Wednesday night I received a call from one of our parishioners, Charles Cook. He helps setting up for the 5:00 PM mass on Sundays. Pauline Cook, Charles' wife had been ill for some time now and in their struggles, I don't think they lost their faith. A beautiful couple. On Wednesday night when Charles called up, he told me that he had received a call from the doctors at the hospital asking him and his family to come to the hospital to say their final farewell to Pauline. Apparently they gave her four hours to 24 hours to live. A very sad thing. And Charles asked me if I could do the last rite for her, at least over the phone.

It was very sad for me and I didn't know how to respond to him. I said I assured him of my prayers and I did pray. So Charles gathered his family to visit Pauline in the hospital to say their final goodbye. And on Thursday, that is this Holy Thursday, Charles called me back and this time I thought, he was going to tell me, you know what I'm talking about, that she's no more. But Charles began his conversation with something like this. He said, "Thank you, Dispin, Thank you for your prayers. Today, I have become a Christian, I have become a believer."

I did not know where this conversation was taking us to, so I just kept listening to him. Charles said, "A miracle happened. The doctors cannot explain how her lungs cleared all the fluid. The doctors cannot explain the miracle of the disappearance of that poison material from her blood. They can't just explain." But he said, "But I know. I can't tell them. I wish I could, but I know it is God who did this. From the darkness of death, God lifted me, Pauline and our whole family into His light of life. Only God could do this."

Now, Charles, if you don't know him, doesn't talk usually like this. He has a different tone of talking. But Charles was very emotional when I asked him for his permission to use this good news story with us, with all of you. And he said he was very happy and he said, "This has changed me forever and I believe I have become a different man. From death to the joy of life and then to the proclamation, Lord, I believe." Then having the courage to share that with others. This is the story of resurrection, from death into life, and having the courage to believe, Lord I believe. And then saying, "God is in my life." Alleluia.

The Lord has risen, this is the message of this Holy Week. In fact, this Holy Week, maybe for the whole year, this is what we travel towards in the liturgical year, the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the greatest. This is the converging point of our faith and worship, the resurrection of Christ. And this means victory over sin, death, darkness and all that brings us down. God springs new life into us, and how beautiful it is. And in this time, when we struggle through those down moments, this is the most appropriate thing that could happen. In fact, the most urgent and necessary thing that must happen, that belief that Christ can free us from our darkness. And the good news is because we are in Christ and with Christ, we too share in the same resurrection.

Friends, this is a game changer. That we don't have to be tied to the tomb, to the darkness and to evil forever. The joy and peace and the new hope that the resurrection brings is part of our daily life. It is not one of those things that happens once a year, it's an everyday experience. Oh, we must make this resurrection experience an everyday experience. As Easter people, we know how to turn darkness and make it the light of Christ, and every day must reflect this resurrection joy. So let us make this resurrection part of our everyday life, and may the spirit of the resurrection, the risen Lord, give us and our families new hope to believe that life is possible, that hope is here and light is present.

We don't have to be grounded to death. In fact, we need to be anchored and grounded in the resurrection of Christ who offers us new hope every day. So let us not live death anymore. Let us not live darkness and diseases and isolation anymore. Let us live faith, let us live hope, let us rejoice. Let us inject that rejoice in everybody we meet in our families, so that the resurrection of Christ can fill us with His light and life every day. Happy Easter. The Lord has risen. Alleluia.