



Homily for 4/21/2019

Easter Sunday

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You were made for communion with God. God created human beings as creatures capable of communion with him. However, when man misused his freedom, choosing evil over good, choosing to serve himself instead of God, the created order began to crumble. We call that Original Sin. Through it death entered to world. Though he had been free before, mankind became enslaved and cut off from communion with God. In a twist on the famous words of St. Augustine, *we had forgotten that we were made for him and so our hearts were restless in their captivity*. In the Book of Wisdom we hear, “God created the human being for incorruptibility and an image of this own eternity; but by the envy of the devil, death entered into the world.” (Wisdom 2:23-24). So, what is man to do? The answer: nothing, by himself. This, rather, is the story about what God has done for us. It will do us well today to tell this story again and to learn about the Saving Mysteries of our Redemption. We will let St. Athanasius, Doctor of the Church, be our teacher.

St Athanasius sums up our fallen condition: “...turning to vice and exceeding all lawlessness, not stopping at one evil but contriving in time every new evil, [human beings] became insatiable in sinning. For there were adulteries and thefts everywhere, the whole earth was full of murders and plundering. There was no concern for law regarding corruption and vice; every wickedness, individually and jointly, was being carried out by all.” (*De Incarnatione*, 5).

The Apostle Paul elaborates for us further that there was not only unlawfulness but even acts contrary to nature as a result of our fall from Grace, as he says in his letter to the Romans, “[The Wicked suppress the truth. . . While claiming to be wise they became fools They exchanged the truth of God for a lie and revered and worshiped the creature rather than the creator. . . . Their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural; and in the same way also the men, leaving aside natural relationship with women, were consumed with their desire for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due reward for their error.” (Romans 1:18-27)

It was for us sinners in this fallen state that God, having pity on us and wanting to save his beloved creature for the sake of His name as our Creator and the image which he had imprinted on our souls, came to us in Jesus Christ to lead us out of the darkness of sin and into the Light of Holiness for which we were made. St. Athanasius again says, “For the Word, realizing that in no other way would the corruption of human being be undone except by dying, yet being immortal and the Son of the Father, the Word was not able to die, for this reason he takes to himself a body capable of death, in order that the body, participating in the Word who is above all, might be sufficient for death on behalf of all, and through the indwelling Word would remain incorruptible. . . . And now the very corruption of death no longer holds ground against human beings because of the indwelling Word, in them through the one body.” (*De Incarnatione*, 9)

For this reason, Christians are able to sing with St. Paul, “when the mortal puts on immortality then shall come to pass the word that has been written: ‘Death has been swallowed up in victory: O death, where is thy sting?’” (1 Corinthians 15:53-55)

A third time we let St. Athanasius teach us: “Of old, before the divine sojourn of the Savior, all used to weep for those dying as if they were perishing. But since the Savior’s raising the body, no longer is death fearsome, but all believers in Christ tread on it as nothing, and would rather choose to die than deny their faith in Christ...And the proof of this is that human beings, before believing in Christ, view death as fearsome and are terrified at it. But when they come to faith in Him and to His teaching, they so despise death that they eagerly rush to it and become witnesses (martyrs) to the resurrection.” (*De Incarnatione*, 27)



Christians, who are not afraid of the cross of suffering for love's sake, should be the marvel of the world. And in fact our Saints have been - from the early martyrs of the Church to the great missionary saints who gave their all to bring this light to all corners of the world. They knew how to die to themselves and live for Christ. Isn't that what we have been striving for these past 40 days? The mortifications that we have endured are only reasonable and sensible in the light of what we celebrate this day - the resurrection. The mortifications and sufferings for love in this life are what St. Athanasius will call 'practice dying'. They are the training we endure in order to hone our faith in the one who has promised to dwell incorruptible within the bodies of those who believe in Him.

The Lord dwells in us by the light of faith. And the light is still burning brightly in we who believe. "Christ our Light," we sang last night as we entered the darkened Church and little by little His light was shared by all. The 'night became like day... dazzling is the night for us, full of gladness!' The power of this Light and the victory won over death is not going to be outshone or undone by sin any longer. Christ is victorious. Your renewal of Baptismal promises today will give witness to this. Your 'I do' to Christ when asked again for your faith is to renew the light given at your baptism. You become the proof of its power when you return insults with love, hatred with forgiveness, evil with kindness. You have been enlightened by Christ and have put on His incorruptibility. A last word is given to St. Athanasius, "If this proof of his resurrection is not sufficient for anyone, then let him believe what is said from what takes place before his eyes. . . . The adulterer no longer commits adultery, the murderer no longer murders, the unjust no longer grasps greedily, and the impious is henceforth pious For where Christ and his faith are named, there all idolatry is purged away, every deceit of demons refuted, and no demon endures the name but fleeing, only hearing it, disappears. This is not the work of one dead, but of one alive!" (*De Incarnatione*, 30).

Alleluia!

Jesus Christ is Risen! He is Risen indeed!