

## Commentary to Easter Sunday



Easter: The Cross and the Candle

A large cross covered with a red cloth is held up at the entrance of the nave. A third of the cloth is removed. “This is the Wood of the Cross on which hung the Savior of the world,” the priest sings. The cross is brought to the center of the church. The second third is removed. Again the priest sings, “This is the Wood of the Cross on which hung the Savior of the world.” The same is repeated in the front. And the people come up to venerate the cross that brought us salvation. They come up to give their burdens to the One who hung on the cross for them.

A large candle is brought into the darkened church. Its light illuminates the church. In the same three places where the cross was unveiled, the priest sings out, “Light of Christ,” and the people respond, “Thanks be to God.” The One who hung upon the cross has brought light to a world suffering in its own darkness.

And Jesus Christ, the Eternal Word of the Father, killed in his humanity, has risen from the dead. And we have risen with Him. We have risen from the stranglehold of the devil. We have risen from evil, from the empty promises of materialism, and from the idolatry of selfishness. We have risen to a new

life, the life of baptism, the life of Jesus Christ, the life of the Trinity, the life of Easter. We are the Easter people. We have received the resurrected life of the Lord at our baptism.

Possessing the Life of Jesus Christ mandates that we strengthen the Kingdom of God, the Kingdom of Life. The Lord has called us out of this darkness and death and given every one of us the ability to make His Presence real for others.

Sometimes people will say that they live to go to heaven. That is insufficient. We live to know God, to love God and to serve God in this life. We live to give the world an experience of the Lord. We live to be the followers of Jesus Christ now. We live to bring a little piece of heaven to earth.

Do you remember that expression, “A little piece of heaven.” A few years ago our parish was gifted with the presence of Fr. Thomas Hagan from Hands Together for Haiti. He came to raise money for the poorest people in the world, but his homily was full of concern about us, about the temptation we have to let materialism dominate our lives. He spoke about the ways that each of us can make the spiritual a living reality in the world. He called the Christian life the way to bring a little bit of heaven to the earth.

Fr. Hagan survived the earthquake. He was there in Port-au-Prince when it took place. Now he is continuing his work to bring a little piece of heaven to those who are in such pain. We were very generous to Hands Together. We were even more generous to Catholic Relief Service’s crisis relief efforts in Haiti. Why? Were we trying to convince people how good and generous we Americans are? No. Were we trying to get something from God? That’s silly, of course not. Why then were we so generous? We were and are generous because people are hurting far more than we are hurting. Helping them is simply the right thing to do. By choosing to do what is right, sacrificing our wants for other people’s needs, even dipping into our own needs for those with a greater need, we proclaim that there is light in darkness, and that light is Jesus Christ, risen and alive.

More and more of our young people are giving their time to care for the poor and hurting both within our country as well as throughout the world. We have a large number, not a few, but a large number, of college students who set aside time every week, or months every year, to bring Christ to others by caring for them. Many of you, including our seniors citizens, are volunteers at soup kitchens and food pantries, hospitals and hospice homes, in schools and on athletic fields, not because you want anything for yourselves, but because others need you. They need your light. They need our light. They need the Light of Christ.

The three places where the cross was revealed are the three places where the Light of Christ is proclaimed. In a real sense, those are two aspects of one act. Joining Christ on the Cross, suffering with Him, results in living in His Light.

All of us are in pain in some way or other. But instead of focusing on ourselves, we unite our pain to Jesus' pain. Our concern is for others. Our own suffering, which could turn us into ourselves, instead, through the grace of God, leads us to care for those hurting more than us. This is how our union with the Lord on the Cross become our union with His Light, our union with His Life. Good Friday and Easter Sunday are manifestations of God's Love for us and our love for God.

What is your pain? Is it sickness? Do you still hurt over the death of a loved one? Is your pain caused by a failed relationship, the marriage that didn't happen, or the marriage that should not have happened? Perhaps it is the adult child who rejects your love. Maybe the pain is the suffering caused by an addiction, yours or someone else's. Perhaps it is your work, or your inability to find a job. We cannot let our crosses go to waste. We need to unite the crosses to the candle. We need to live in a way that others can experience the Risen Life of the Lord. No matter what our challenges, or joys may be, we need to live for and with Jesus Christ.

The world needs us to live for the Lord. The world is in such darkness that it continually attacks people of faith. That same world needs to see in our faith the way out of darkness. The world needs to experience Jesus Christ.

It is all about Jesus, you know. Everything that matters in life reflects His Presence. Anything that does not exhibit the love of the Lord is empty, shallow, and dark. With Jesus Christ there is Light. With Jesus Christ there is Life.

The cross and the candle unite sacrificial love to eternal life. We pray today for the courage to bring His life to others. For that is what it means to be an Easter people.

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