

Homily041617

WE HAVE REASON FOR JOY—ALWAYS!

Recently I read an account written by a woman who was blessed to have a wonderful, simple and caring mother. She loved her mother deeply and so was very upset when her mother was diagnosed with Lou Gehrig's Disease at the end of her life. For the last three years she could do almost nothing for herself. The woman thought this to be terribly unfair to her mother and terribly unfair on God's part not to have prevented it. When the mom finally died and the funeral was over, the woman felt she had a bone to pick with God and she had decided that the only way it could be settled was if God would give her a direct sign that her mother was in heaven. She prayed, she asked, she begged, she threatened, she cajoled. Nothing. Then one morning upon awakening she remembered a dream from the night. Typically she doesn't remember her dreams but this one she did. It was a memory from many years back when her dad and mom had taken a vacation to see some old friends and visit the Grand Canyon. She remembered asking her mom to describe the Grand Canyon. Her mom said: "No words could ever capture what the Grand Canyon is like. You have to go there and experience it for yourself." And then her mom, in the dream, said: "And heaven is like that too." That was the sign. Suddenly she knew. She made no more demands of the Lord. She was at peace.

Jesus Christ is the Son of God. The Word became flesh and dwelled among us. We say that every Christmas. We say it again this Easter Sunday. My friends, this life is hard. Sin is real and it takes a terrible toll on us. And that is why the Son of God took on our flesh to become not just one like us but one with us and one of us. This morning is a beautiful morning. The darkness of Good Friday's death and Holy Saturday's absence are over. The night. The darkness. Both are real. And often they are the more favored times for sin. They lend themselves to hiddenness and secrecy.

That is what the world was before Jesus came. He is the light of the world and He brought light into this world so that we might see. That is why he came and taught and cured and healed. That is also why we killed him. He was too much for us. The people of Jerusalem saw him die. Those who believed in him and loved him were so crushed they could not speak. Just weep. All their hopes were dashed. The Holy One had been brutally killed. Many saw his holiness. Some saw only the threat he was. But then on that Sunday morn all was changed. Those who saw him

die and be buried now witnessed an empty tomb and then they saw him, here and there. He appeared to them, he spoke to them, he ate with them, he let them touch him—but not cling to him.

“I live! I am alive! I am risen from the dead!” That was his message. Nevermore to die. The gates of heaven have been thrown open for all who believe and those in the realm of the dead have reason for hope and the promise of life if they but put their faith in Jesus. And today, you and I get to choose whether we will put our faith in Him, choosing to live in the light and shunning the darkness. We get to choose whether we believe He is risen or not. And we have to choose. And we have chosen. That is why we are here today. We do believe.

But make no mistake about it. Only through the darkness of Good Friday and Calvary, and only through the deathly stillness of Holy Saturday’s entombment, could the disciples be led to grasp who Jesus really is. For, you see, they had been trying to make him be who they wanted him to be and how they wanted him to be. All of that dies on Friday. The One raised up on Sunday is the real Holy One of God no longer encumbered by what we want or what we think. He is the living God for all time and all eternity. Either we believe or we do not.

If we believe there is reason for hope. If there is reason for hope then there is reason for joy. His victory is the victory of love, forgiving love. And that is to be our victory too. Easter is about love’s triumph over sin and death and all the other powers of this world. If we love we are his. If we love we share in his victory. If we love the power of death is overcome. That has happened. Think about that. That has happened. Death has lost its power. Life and love are victorious—always and forever. That is what that woman saw in her dream. That is what we believe. Let us rejoice and be glad. Happy Easter!