Father O’Connor’s Easter Sunday Homily

17 April 2022

An African-American pastor began preaching on Good Friday by saying, “It’s Friday, and Sunday’s coming.”

One of the deacons yelled out encouragingly, “Preach, brother. Preach!”

“It’s Friday, and Mary’s crying her eyes out, and the disciples are all scattered like sheep without a shepherd. It’s Friday, and Sunday’s coming.”

He kept repeating that line until he reached a high point and shouted out, “It’s Friday!” And with one voice the congregation shouted back, “And Sunday’s coming!”

It is my great privilege and happiness to stand before you today and proclaim, “It was Good Friday. And now Easter Sunday has come!”

We are so familiar with the accounts of Jesus’ resurrection from the dead that it is difficult for us to capture a sense of the total astonishment of the first witnesses.

To begin with, there are no adequate words to describe what had never happened before to any other human being. We are plunged into the deepest mystery.

For the first time since creation began, there is a living human being who will never know death again. On Easter Sunday, time and eternity – both mysterious – have come together. And because Jesus lives, we will live forever.

We can only imagine the complete astonishment of Mary Magdalene and the Apostles when the Risen Christ appeared to them. They must have thought, “He was dead, and somehow He is now alive. It really is Jesus. He still has the marks of His wounds.”

We Christian people believe this too. And the faith to do so is itself a gift from God.

Last night, I received two men into the Catholic Church, and I gave them the Sacrament of Confirmation and their First Holy Communion: Richard Demos and Ed Solis. They received and accepted the gift of faith as new Catholics last evening during the Easter Vigil Liturgy, the first Mass of Easter.

Skeptics have come up with all kinds of explanations about what happened to Jesus after Good Friday.

“Jesus came back spiritually from the dead,” some say. So, apparently, does Elvis Presley.

Others say, “Jesus would not be remembered if He had not come back in some way.” That is a bit of an improvement, but Gautama Buddha has Jesus beat on this score. Buddha is remembered after nearly three thousand years.

But what about the faith of billions of Christian people throughout these more than two thousand years who have believed that Jesus truly rose from the dead?

To use the words of Saint John Henry Cardinal Newman,“You have to bend your stiff neck to decide that your mind is not the measure of all things in heaven and on earth.”

Easter is the day to believe with all of your heart and soul, mind and strength that Jesus, who once was dead, now lives. And that because He lives, we will live forever too. This belief gives profound meaning and significance to our lives today.

As the Christian hymn puts it:

Because He lives, I can face tomorrow.

Because He lives, all fear is gone.

For I know He holds the future.

And life is worth the living just because He lives.

Life has lots of sorrows, lots of “ways of the Cross.” And, if you live long enough, it includes some trips to Calvary as well.

But life has only one Easter.

“It was Friday… and Sunday has come!”

For Good Friday is not God’s final word. Easter Sunday is. And “Easter Sunday has come!”

Happy Easter, everyone!