

Third Sunday After Easter – Extraordinary Form
Ave Maria Catholic Church, Sunday, May 8, 2022

1 Peter, 2: 11–19

Beloved, I urge you as aliens and sojourners to keep away from worldly desires that wage war against the soul. Maintain good conduct among the Gentiles so that if they speak of you as evildoers, they may observe your good works and glorify God on the day of visitation. Be subject to every human institution for the Lord's sake, whether it be to the king as supreme or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the approval of those who do good. For it is the will of God that by doing good you may silence the ignorance of foolish people. Be free, yet without using freedom as a pretext for evil, but as slaves of God. Give honor to all, love the community, fear God, honor the king. Slaves, be subject to your masters with all reverence, not only to those who are good and equitable but also to those who are perverse. For whenever anyone bears the pain of unjust suffering because of consciousness of God, that is a grace.

John 16: 16–22

At that time, Jesus said to his disciples: “A little while and you will no longer see me, and again a little while later and you will see me.” So, some of his disciples said to one another: “What does this mean that he is saying to us, ‘A little while and you will not see me, and again a little while and you will see me,’ and ‘Because I am going to the Father?’” So, they said, “What is this ‘little while’ [of which he speaks]? We do not know what he means.” Jesus knew that they wanted to ask him, so he said to them: “Are you discussing with one another what I said, ‘A little while and you will not see me, and again a little while and you will see me’? Amen, amen, I say to you, you will weep and mourn, while the world rejoices; you will grieve, but your grief will become joy. When a woman is in labor, she is in anguish because her hour has arrived; but when she has given birth to a child, she no longer remembers the pain because of her joy that a child has been born into the world. So, you also are now in anguish. But I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy away from you.

A Joyful Heart

Third Sunday after Easter - John 16: 16–22

Ave Maria Catholic Church, May 8, 2022 - Fr. David M Vidal

In today's gospel, we hear the promise of Jesus: *"Amen, amen, I say to you, you will weep and mourn, while the world rejoices"* (John 16: 20)

These words may disturb us, especially in the present context of the celebration of Easter. Perhaps, we are trying to erase from our minds the sad memories of the Passion of Christ, the treason, the unjust condemnation, the cruel punishments, the humiliations, and in particular, his Cross and the death of Jesus.

Jesus rose from the dead; why would our joy be disturbed? Jesus dies no more; why do we weep?

However, Jesus tells us: *"You will weep and mourn while the world rejoices."*

Perhaps, there is something we missed in our celebration of Easter. If we did, today's gospel wants to bring us back into focus. It is true, Jesus rose from the dead and dies no more. It is true, Jesus triumphed over sin and eternal death and offers the gift of eternal life to us. However, it is wrong to think that Jesus claimed this earthly life would be heaven when in truth, it is only a time of trial and purification for the heaven we hope for.

Even more, Jesus invites us to *"take the cross daily"* (Lk 9:23) and follow him. Perhaps, we were expecting a resurrection without death. Maybe we were expecting a life of glory on earth as it is in heaven. However, that is not God's plan of redemption. There is no resurrection without death, and *"without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness."* (Hebrews 9: 22).

This discovery caused Saint Paul to choose strong and specific words when he wrote the Letter to the Galatians: *"I have been crucified with Christ, it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me: and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me"* (Gal 2:19-20)

The Cross of Christ radiates salvific light. Through the light of Faith, the witnesses of Christ's Passion are at the same time witnesses of his Resurrection. St Paul writes in his letter to the Philippians: *"That I may know him (Christ) and the power of his Resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that if possible, I may attain the resurrection from the dead"* (Phil. 3:10-11)

The witnesses of the Cross and Resurrection were convinced that *"through many tribulations, we must enter the Kingdom of God,"* (Acts 14:22).

The Apostle's experience as partakers in the sufferings of Christ goes even further. In the Letter to the Colossians, we read the words which constitute, as it were, the ultimate understanding of suffering: *"Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh, I complete what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the Church"* (Col. 1:24)

Yes, I rejoice in my suffering! These words may be difficult for us to understand, but a person of faith can say: "I rejoice in my weeping, I rejoice in my mourning, I rejoice in my suffering, I rejoice in my Cross," with complete sanity and coherence. Why? Because nobody can rise without dying first.

Yes, Jesus died for us, but He also invites us to die with him. This is the condition of discipleship: *"Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it."* (Mt 16: 24–25)

Now, in today's gospel, we heard another promise: *"You will grieve, but your grief will become joy . . . So, you also are now in anguish. But I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy away from you."* (John 16: 20.22)

This second promise illuminates our existence as Christians. As Christians, we must tell the world that light has triumphed over darkness, that truth has overcome the kingdom of lies, and that victory is our destiny if we belong to Christ.

In other words, the heart of a Christian must be joyful and must radiate happiness.

The joyful heart radiates its happiness. And this is what the joyful heart preaches:

First, the joyful heart preaches that it is necessary to arise spiritually, from the death of the soul which we acquire by our sins, to that life of justice which is obtained through penance: *"Rise, you who sleep, and arise from the dead; and Christ shall enlighten you."* (Eph. 5, 14). This is the first resurrection. The apostle John tells us in the book of Revelation: *"Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection,"* (Rev. 20: 6). We must rise from a life of sin to a life of grace. If we do not rise to a life of grace, how can we expect to share the eternal happiness of the final and definitive resurrection?

Second, the joyful heart does not delay the resurrection until the moment of death, but the joyful heart rises immediately. Jesus did not delay communicating his joy with us since Christ arose on the third day. Neither must we delay in living that life of grace. The book of Ecclesiasticus says: *"Delay not to be converted to the Lord; and defer it not from day to day,"* (Ecclus, 5, 8).

Finally, a joyful heart is convinced that “*All things work for good for those who love God,*” (Rom 8:28). Therefore, all events of life, either joyful or sorrowful events, are faced with the profound conviction that nothing will be able to separate us from the love of God.

It is true that there will be times of grief and anguish, but it is also true that we must “*consider that the sufferings of this present time are as nothing compared with the glory to be revealed for us,*” (Rom 8: 18). That simple consideration should suffice to fill our hearts with joy.

Some might be tempted to say: Joy is possible, but only in our future life! No, a joyful heart is possible in this present life. We can have a joyful heart even in this valley of tears: a joyful heart that radiates goodness, purity, honesty, care, and compassion for others. In a few words: A joyful heart is more like the heart of Jesus!

May our Lady help us to proclaim the good news of Jesus’s resurrection to the whole world. May this supernatural happiness, which is truly a gift from Jesus’s resurrection, be our message.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.