

Fr. Nick Dant's Homily, Saint Matthew Catholic Church, Indianapolis
Easter, April 3-4, 2021, Cycle B

With great joy on this most holy of (nights/days) we proclaim: "Jesus lives! Jesus is Risen! God has raised up Jesus and made him both Lord and Christ!

-Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia (Sing to the tune of "Ye Sons and Daughters")

Mary Magdalene, Mary, mother of James and Salome find the huge stone to the tomb rolled back, and the gospel of Mark tells us that the women were utterly amazed – the body of Jesus is gone, and they saw a young man in a white robe sitting in the tomb. He says: "Do not be amazed! You seek Jesus of Nazareth, the crucified. He has been raised; he is not here."

-Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia,

But the gospel writer of Mark ends his Resurrection narrative in an astounding way, and we do not read this passage in our Liturgical proclamation of Mark's Easter Gospel, and I am not sure why. It is verse 8, and Mark concludes his narrative in verse 8 saying: "They went out and fled from the tomb, seized with trembling and bewilderment. They said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid."

An odd way to end the joyful story of Jesus Risen – not telling anyone? Fear and trembling? Maybe not so odd! Maybe Mark has an insight into human nature that the three other gospels fail to grasp!

The imminent Protestant Theologian Karl Barth maintained that the Resurrection "is a difficult (dark) truth and a word that can scarcely be tolerated by our ears". Why? Because, Karl Barth insists "we are threatened by resurrection since we do not like to admit that we are deeply imprisoned in our world of sin and death and that we are incapable of helping ourselves". There is no way out of this life with its thousand festering needs. Maybe nothing, except the possibility of a miracle, can help us".

Well this (night/day) we celebrate and proclaim that miracle, where God has reached down into the depths of human suffering and death and calls out: "Rise up! You are dead, but I call you to live". We rejoice!

-Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia,

And, like the women at the tomb, we tremble with fear. For while Resurrection frees us, Resurrection also reveals – our helplessness, the claims that blind us – reveals our sin, our selfishness! Resurrection tells us that our only refuge from the terror of ourselves is God. Nothing of our own devising can free us from sin and death – no wonder the women went away from the tomb in fear and trembling! Resurrection reveals that – we are not omniscient. We are really in control of nothing! We are entirely helpless and doomed to death – without the power of God reaching into our lives. But, if we are willing to recognize our absolute poverty before God – and take God's hand that He stretches out in help – then our trembling can turn into joy – then, the gift of Resurrection is ours. - Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia (sing)

As the apostle Paul assures us, being baptized we have the joy of knowing that we share in Life of the Risen Lord – Now! Yes, we await the fullness of God’s Kingdom, but, for we who are baptized, eternal life has already begun. In baptism (as our Catechumens will do this night) we followed Jesus from the darkness of sin and death into the Light that will never die. In our Resurrection hope, we dare this night/day (as the Moravians do every Easter when they celebrate Easter in the cemetery) to dance with joy over the tombstones and laugh with abandon in the face of death because death and the chaos of our world – the chaos of war and sickness, poverty and homelessness, unemployment and violence have no ultimate hold on us!

- Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia,

For on this holy night/day we find the tomb empty – with the women we stand in awe, speechless – words cannot express our amazement, our wonder of the great love of our God for us.

Jesus of Nazareth is Risen, - made new! This night/day we find hope, we discover joy, “He is not here, He has been raised!”

Our lives that we live as human beings has been vindicated – our lives of sorrow, pain and death, For the crucified One is Risen!

We do dance for joy like fools among the graves – and throw our heads back and roar with laughter in the face of death.

This night/day we proclaim along with the great St. John Chrysostom, as he preached, at Easter centuries ago: Let no one bewail, Let no one weep! Let no one fear death for the Savior’s death has set us free! He who was prisoner by death has annihilated death. By descending into death, he made death captive. Jesus angered death when death tasted his flesh. The prophet Isaiah saw this, and he cried:

“Death was angered when it encountered you in the lower regions.” Why was death angered?

Death was angered, for it was defeated.

Death was angered, for it was mocked.

Death was angered, for it was abolished.

Death was angered, for it was overthrown.

Death was angered, for it was bound in chains.

Death received a body and it met God face to face.

Death took that which is seen and fell upon the unseen.

O Death, where is your sting?

O Grave where is your victory?

Christ is Risen and you are overthrown.

Christ is Risen and the devils have fallen.

Christ is Risen and the angels rejoice.

Christ is Risen and life reigns.

Christ is Risen and not one dead remains in the grave.

For Christ, being risen from the dead, is become the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep, and to him be glory now and honor, even to all eternity, forever and ever. Amen!

- Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia,