

Easter Pastoral Message

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Holy Week begins with Palm Sunday, and we must be attentive to all that is being offered to us for our reflection, prayer, and spiritual benefit. Everything celebrated throughout Holy Week clearly reminds us that God is with us now, working on our behalf and that the power of the resurrection of Christ ought to have a daily and real effect in our lives. We are challenged to examine our own lives in the light of some of the characters in the Passion.

During Holy Week, we enter into the great mystery of obedience, the mystery that obedience, and not doing whatever we want, leads to the fullness of human life, to exaltation, to eternal life. This means that we are called to acclaim the Lord not merely with our lips or just on certain days of the year, but with our lives, every day. How we live should be different from the way someone who does not believe would live. Saint Charles de Foucauld, said it this way, *“proclaiming the Gospel with your life.”*

We are reminded, in a more profound and solemn way this week, that Jesus freely chose to enter into the broken condition humanity. Jesus freely chose to take upon himself a disfigurement which he had in no way merited. He did this in obedience to the divine plan of salvation, a plan which would have him go to the depths of human destitution so that God might transform the destitution, creating in us new hearts: *“I will sprinkle clean water over you to make you clean; from all your impurities and from all your idols I will cleanse you. I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put my spirit within you so that you walk in my statutes, observe my ordinances, and keep them. You will live in the land I gave to your ancestors; you will be my people, and I will be your God.”* Exodus 36:24-28

Our belonging to Christ is to be a matter of the heart that encompasses our entire being and time. That does not mean we neglect the “mundane” aspects of our life. Rather it means that all of it is to be consecrated to God and entrusted to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, so that we may be people on fire for God and for the Kingdom of God present and yet to come. This implies we know our God, that we spend time in prayer each day and joyfully participate in the sacraments of the Church, especially Reconciliation and the Eucharist.

On Good Friday we focus on the very personal nature of God’s love for us. That God loved us so much, He was willing to give His only begotten Son. We focus on the truth that the only reason we do not despair and succumb to the darkness, but rather that we have the hope of freedom to love, to go and sin no more, to be saints... the only reason is that God exists, God loves, and God the Son... living, holy and pure sacrifice died for me, personally and that in believing this truth, in Him I will not die, but have eternal life.

In between Good Friday and Easter Sunday we have Holy Saturday, for being still and knowing that he is God. A day on which we descend into the silence of the tomb and contemplate the meaning of God's great love for us, for me. We contemplate the price paid for my life. We contemplate our actions and their consequences. *"It is for freedom that Christ has set you free; therefore, stand firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery."*

Gal 5:1 Be transformed, listen to him, do what he says and, go, sin no more.

On Easter Sunday we will rejoice together that Christ is risen! He is truly risen! We will focus on our salvation, the victory won for us, of our being made for eternal union with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We will focus on the joy of our salvation and living more fully the way, the truth and the life of the resurrection. We will focus on dying and rising in Christ, through our baptism, being born of water and the spirit, with hearts renewed by prayer and the grace of these holy days. The Resurrection of Jesus is not simply a memory from long ago; it is God's living promise that love is stronger than sin, that light is stronger than darkness, and that life is stronger than death.

Let this season be a homecoming. If it has been a long time since your last Confession, please do not be afraid—come, and receive the freedom Christ desires for you. As a parish family, let us live Easter visibly. Make Sunday Mass the steady center of your week. Pray at home—especially as families—even if it is only a few simple words each day. Reach out to someone who is lonely. Forgive where forgiveness is needed. And let us practice charity in concrete ways, remembering that we meet the Risen Christ in the poor, the sick, the grieving, and the forgotten.

Thank you for the many ways you serve our parish and support one another throughout the year. I am grateful for your faith, your generosity, and your desire to grow as disciples. Please know of my prayers for you and for all those you love.

May the Risen Lord fill your home with His peace, renew your hope, and strengthen you to be witnesses of His love!

Sincerely in Christ,

Fr. Blair