

Easter Sunday
4/9/2023

WE MUST CELEBRATE

Probably the most famous, and one of the most moving and certainly the longest of all Jesus' parables is that of the Prodigal Son. Some people find it touching and comforting while others, to be honest, find it disturbing. But what does any of this have to do with the resurrection of Jesus? Well tucked away in that parable, is one of the most beautiful lines of the Bible: *We must celebrate and rejoice, because your brother was dead and has come to life again* (Luke 5:32). The father in that parable doesn't say we can celebrate or we ought to celebrate but rather, We must celebrate and rejoice. And then he explains why: *because your brother was dead and has come to life again*.

And those words apply today. *We must celebrate and rejoice*. We celebrate because in Jesus, God takes on human life to share with us and by becoming human, Jesus who is our Lord, our king, our redeemer, our savior, also becomes our brother. Jesus is a brother who not only shares life with us but who also dies for us and then rises from the dead. He overcomes death with death. Truly human he really dies and truly God, he really rises from the dead. The wondrous love of God emptied the tomb of Jesus transforming it into the womb of new life. Now the younger son in the parable was morally dead because of sin while Jesus was without sin; but Jesus truly died, taking on the sins of us all and rose to new life.

And so, we must celebrate and rejoice because Jesus our brother was dead and has come to life again. Even amidst all the troubles that beset our world, we must celebrate and rejoice as now we know that death doesn't have the last word. Mary Magdalen, Peter, the disciple Jesus loved and the others were not anxiously waiting for the resurrection. They had forgotten it and were filled with grief. And today reminds us that in difficult moments, even in moments of sorrow and grief: *Don't forget the resurrection*.

The Resurrection of Jesus is about hope or it's about nothing at all. It's about hope in new life, the hope that flows from our baptism. St. Paul tells us that when we're baptized into Christ Jesus, we're baptized into his death so that we may share in his resurrection (cf. Romans 6:3ff). In other words, through our baptism, we share

in the dying and rising of Jesus. We are grafted onto his Paschal Mystery that moves from life through death and into new life. Sacramentally, we share in what Jesus did but we experience the reality. It's like we ride on the back of Jesus as he is crossing a stream. We don't get wet as he does but he gets us to the other side.

And so on this day, we renew our own baptismal promises, remembering that we share in Jesus' death *and* resurrection. We realize that for those who persevere in that grace, the love of God, which emptied the tomb of Jesus, will empty our tombs transforming them into wombs of new life.

The mission of the Church continues even in troubled times. This mission is carried on by all of us together as members of the body of Christ. When you're faithful to the duties of your vocation in life, when you show patience to others, when you reach out to the poor and those in need, when you continue to pray and to love and serve, when you bring Christ and Christian values into classrooms and boardrooms, into courtrooms and operating rooms, into wherever you may be, you continue the work of the Church. When you do good with great love in big ways or in *every little way*, you continue the mission of the Church. The mission of the Church continues and it does so through each and every one of us.

And as members of St. Therese Parish, we have another reason to celebrate. On Easter Sunday 1950, in what was Leland Funeral Home in downtown Parkville, the first Mass of St. Therese Parish was celebrated. Today is our seventy-third birthday and the mission of the Church continues and the message remains the same as then: *The Lord is Risen.*

We must celebrate and rejoice because our brother was dead and has come to life. He calls us to share in his new life. We don't forget the resurrection. With generous hearts and lives of intentional faith, may we always answer that call and the new life he extends to us.