

Christ is risen! He is truly risen! Alleluia! Okay, now what?

What does the Resurrection practically mean for my life? What am I supposed to do now in *response* to the Resurrection of Jesus? Well our Lord answers that question for us in today's Liturgy of the Word, which is pretty much unanimous in its central message from the First Reading to the Gospel: ***Repent and be forgiven! Repent and be converted!***

In the First Reading today from the Acts of the Apostles, we hear St. Peter give a bold speech recounting the Passion, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus. At the end of his speech, St. Peter gives what may be called an “action item” in response to Jesus' Passion, Death, and Resurrection—he says: “***Repent, therefore, and be converted***, that your sins may be wiped away.”

In other words, ***in response*** to ***everything*** that our Lord Jesus Christ just did for us through His Passion, Death, and Resurrection out of His great love for us, we should truly love Him ***in return*** by ***turning away from our sins*** with the help of God's grace and turning back towards Christ, Who loves us more than we love ourselves! Post-Resurrection, God invites us to come back to Him, seek His forgiveness

for our sins and receive His Divine Mercy, which is greater and more powerful than all of our sins and failures combined! Brothers and sisters, after faith, *repentance* is the best response to our Lord's Resurrection!

In the Second Reading from the First Letter of St. John the Evangelist, we hear the youngest Apostle say: "My children, I am writing this to you so that you may not commit sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous one. He is expiation for our sins, and not for our sins only but for those of the whole world. The way we may be sure that we know him is to keep his commandments. Those who say, "I know him," but do not keep his commandments are liars, and the truth is not in them. *But whoever keeps his word*, the love of God is truly perfected in him."

Brothers and sisters, God cares about sin *because He cares deeply about us!* God cares about sin *precisely* because He loves us and He knows that sin endangers us, threatens us, hurts us, and can destroy us. The whole reason God became one of us in Jesus Christ and suffered

and died for us and then rose again from the dead, was to save us from sin and death!

And so in light of all that God has done for us through Christ, in His Passion, Death, and Resurrection for the sake of our eternal salvation, the Lord calls us to avoid sin with the help of His grace and to firmly to reject sin and the evil that it is. The consistent message of the Apostles and the early Church post-Resurrection is basically this: God just suffered and died for our sins and then He victoriously rose from the dead for us—therefore, let’s not slam the door in His face and reject the supreme gift of salvation which He just won for us! Let’s not reject His victorious love and mercy! Let’s not reject His supreme Sacrifice for us! Rather, let’s receive the unmerited gift of salvation with every fiber of our being and live that gift with our whole life!

Finally, in the Gospel today from St. Luke, we hear of this mysterious and beautiful encounter between our risen Savior and the Apostles and we witness their struggle to accept the reality of the Resurrection. In the midst of their fear and doubt, our Lord Jesus lovingly comes to them and says, “Peace be with you...Why are you

troubled? And why do questions arise in your hearts?” At the end of this mysterious encounter, we hear our Lord Jesus basically set the stage for the main proclamation of the Apostles and the early Church after His Resurrection: “Thus it is written that the Christ would suffer and rise from the dead on the third day and that *repentance, for the forgiveness of sins*, would be preached in his name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.”

In saying this, our Lord Jesus declares that *repentance*, turning away from one’s sins and seeking God’s forgiveness, *is at the heart of receiving the Easter message!* Brothers and sisters, repentance is an act of faith, hope, and love. Repentance is an *act of worship*, where we humbly turn to God and allow Him to love us, heal us, and forgive us of our sins against Him, others, and ourselves. And God loves to forgive us! He never tires of forgiving us! Nothing brings God more joy than when we lovingly return to Him in the Sacrament of Reconciliation and receive His saving mercy and grace.

Brothers and sisters, one of the greatest sins of our day is the total loss of the sense of sin. This collective neglect of sin is borne out of

prideful arrogance, that we're somehow absolutely perfect and have no need of seeking God's mercy and going to confession. We can ignore our own sinfulness and rationalize our behavior by refusing to do an honest and humble examination of conscience. We say things like "Well I'm a good person, I haven't murdered anyone or stolen anything." Brothers and sisters, that's great, but there are a whole lot of other sins we commit besides murder and theft. ***And the Good News is that God wants to free us from our sins!***

To be clear, ***it's the good person, the virtuous person who repents!*** It's the good person who humbly and honestly acknowledges their sinfulness and confesses their sins. It's the wicked, vicious person who refuses to repent and acknowledge their sinfulness. Brothers and sisters, please know that the Sacrament of Confession is ***not a place of shame or defeat!*** Rather, the Sacrament of Confession is a ***place of victory!***

Again, I'm not talking about sin right now to be a "mean, harsh priest!" No, I'm talking about sin right now because God Himself talks about sin, as we just heard in the Liturgy of the Word today. If God

didn't care about sin, then He wouldn't have suffered and died for us because of it! Again, the only reason God cares about sin is because *He cares about us* and doesn't want us to perish because of sin! He wants us to be free of sin and the destructive shame it inflicts upon us! God wants us to live in the light and freedom of His love and goodness! He wants us to be truly happy!

And true happiness, freedom, and peace comes from *doing the will of God* who created us and knows us better than we know ourselves!

True happiness, freedom, and peace comes from *repentance* and humbly seeking God's mercy and forgiveness for our sins, especially through the Sacrament of Reconciliation (aka Penance or Confession) for any grave sins we may have committed. True happiness, freedom, and peace comes from humbly dying to ourselves, our stubborn pride and sinfulness and living entirely for our risen Savior—conforming our entire life to Christ and the teachings of His Catholic Church.

St. Paul famously wrote in his Second Letter to Corinthians: “Working together, then, we appeal to you not to receive the grace of God in vain (2 Corinthians 6:1). Brothers and sisters, Holy Mother

Church calls the time period that comes after the Resurrection of Christ, the time period we've been living in since that first Easter Sunday, the "time of victory." We're currently living in the time of victory.

Therefore, let's heed the Lord's words to us in the Liturgy today and not receive the grace of God in vain. God has already won the war for us, may we gracefully act like it and truly live in His victory by turning away from all of our sins—the same sins that sent Jesus to the cross and to His death—the same sins that were conquered by Christ in His Resurrection. Christ is risen! He is truly risen! Alleluia!