

FIVE MINUTE SERMON  
EASTER SUNDAY

THE EASTERN COMMUNION  
"Christ our Pasch is sacrificed." (1 Cor. v. 7.)  
The Pasch, or Passover, of the Jews was the feast celebrated by them in commemoration of their deliverance from the Egyptian bondage. Our Blessed Lord kept the observance the night before He died. He and His disciples stood round the table, girt as men ready for the escape and the journey, and partook of the lamb and the unleavened bread. How full was the sacred Heart of Christ with the significance of all that was to be done that night! Then He—the Lamb of God Himself—took the unleavened bread and blessed it, and instituted the new Pasch, the Sacrament of the new deliverance, the new food of the wayfarer seeking the heavenly kingdom. This explains how St. Paul, twenty-five years later, came to write to the Corinthians to this effect: Purge out the old leaven; for our Pasch, Christ the Lord, has been sacrificed for us, and let us keep the feast in the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

As the Pasch was most religiously observed by every Jew, so the new Pasch—the Eastern Communion—is an institution ordered by the Church and to be strictly observed by every Catholic. The ceremonial of the ancient rite is typical of much that we have to adhere to carefully. The Apostle tells us to purge out the old leaven, that we may not feast with the leaven of malice and wickedness. Yes; our conscience has to be purified, and we have a ceremonial instituted for cleansing our souls from malice and wickedness. That has been the work of the holy time of Lent, preparing for it, accomplishing it through the Sacrament of Penance. A good Confession has been the blessed means of our deliverance from the land of bondage, from the slavery of the devil. No mere anniversary this; no ceremonial commemorative only of a deliverance that had taken place, but a greater reality to our souls than the deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt. They only escaped an earthly bondage, we the eternal bondage of mortal sin and the punishment due to it. If they had cause for perpetual thanksgiving, how much more does Easter speak to us of deliverance, joy, and gratitude!

And if we are thankful for the escape from "malice and wickedness" and the judgment that follows on, let us in "all sincerity and truth" fulfil the precept of the Lord. Christ in His mercy has made Himself the food of the wayfarer. Therefore, strengthened with this food, we must set out with rectitude and a pure intention to persevere in the way to our promised land, the kingdom of heaven—our sins repented of, error, any taint of infidelity, a worldly spirit, all cast from us, for a little leaven corrupteth the whole. And instead of these, take up and live in the works of sincerity and truth, such as daily prayer, the Sunday's Mass, frequently repeated Communions, the food to keep us up to the vigour and effort of these good works. And we must do all this with a thankful heart. We have escaped, we have been delivered, and Easter is the festival of our victory.

One more lesson to be learned from the ancient institutions of the Jews. They partook of the Paschal lamb, as their forefathers had done the night of their deliverance; they stood round the table, with staves in their hands and their garments girded round them like men ready for a journey. Yes, my brethren, as each year comes round, another Easter bids us hurry on the journey. Have we made good our escape? or have we spent another year dallying with the flesh-pots of Egypt, the pleasures of an easy, sinful life, instead of having broken with sin, and hurried on to safety, obeying God?

Have we these dispositions in our hearts this Easter? Have we really turned out malice and wickedness, manfully got quit of them, broken with bad habits and evil companions or shall we allow them in a few days to take up their old abode in our hearts? Have we proved our sincerity and truth by being prepared to do all that is demanded of us? Do we feel an eagerness bidding us set out and hurry on the journey?

We, too, have risen this Easter-time from sin and lethargy, and if we have risen with Christ, "seek the things that are above, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God . . . mind the things that are above." (Col. iii. 1, 2.) We are false to our Redeemer unless we endeavor to make a change in our lives. Despising this world and all that it may offer—and surely our Lenten Confession taught us that—we must seek the things that are above. Our interests, our aims, our hearts' desire, must be centred in the worship, the glorifying, the obeying God, "that as Christ be risen from the dead . . . so we also may walk in the newness of life." (Rom. vi. 4.)

My dear brethren, an Easter Communion is not just an ordinary one. True, it is the same Body and Blood of Jesus Christ our Saviour that we receive in each and every Communion, but the Easter one fulfils a precept—there is stamped on it the merit of obedience. The Easter one is a commemorative one—we glorify God that Christ our Pasch is sacrificed. It is a fresh start for every one on the way to heaven. We must not look back, but press onward. But we cannot help our thoughts looking back, and the memory of old friends and comrades takes us back,

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Where are they? They are not amongst the happy band of those who have risen with Christ. Alas! how many—Catholics in name—stay away from their Easter Communion! Do not judge them; pray for them; ask our Blessed Lord to win them over, to enlighten them, that they may understand that this is not their lasting home, that they are only wayfarers, that this is a land of exile, that the journey to their home is long and toilsome. Oh, that there might be only one band, all united, seeking the heavenly fatherland! We have the food of the wayfarer, Christ our Lord; we hear Him with us; He strengthens us on our journey, and when we have reached our home He becomes our eternal reward, the glory of our salvation.

EASTER LILY

Bathed in the glory of the Easter morn,  
Steep'd in its gladness and its fresh delight,  
The lily lifts its head—a symbol white  
Of Christ, the Risen One! This day,  
new-born,  
He issues from the sepulchre for-lorn—  
His raiment whiter than the lily's snow,  
His bright hair flung, in golden wealth unshorn.  
From radiant brow and gracious eyes aglow!  
In the dark earth the lily's seed was sown;  
In the black grave the Crucifix was laid,  
From dusky mold the fairest flower hath grown,  
And Christ hath risen from the tomb's dark shade!  
Of Easter lilies let his crown be made,  
Let Easter lilies in His path be strewn.  
—ELEANOR C. DONNELLY

THE EASTER MESSAGE

To all believers in Christ Easter Sunday is a day of supreme gladness. It is the gladdest day in all the year. For if on Christmas Day our hearts swell with joy when looking upon the infant in the crib, there is always present the haunting thought that He has come to us only to die, and so "blot out the handwriting that is against us." On Easter Sunday, however, there is no shadow on our joy. Calvary, with all that it implies and connotes, is behind Christ, as the mountain peaks are behind the traveller hastening towards the plain. The Master has passed through the furnace of tribulation. He has gone down to the tomb, dead—pierced in hand and foot and side and bound tightly in the winding-sheet, according to the manner of the Jews. But to day He is risen and henceforth shall live and reign forever. Not without reason, then, has Holy Mother Church taken the Alleluia as her Easter refrain: "For this is the day that the Lord hath made; let us rejoice and be glad in it."

During the forty days of Lent we have tried by penance and mortifications to impress effectually upon ourselves the fact that we are followers of that Man of Sorrows who preached penance and renunciation of self, and chose as the symbol of His faith and teaching the ignominious sign of the cross. We have endeavored to realize better than at any other time of the year the gospel of suffering, as announced by Christ. We fasted because the Man-God fasted. We denied ourselves legitimate joys and pleasures of life, because our Christ has taught us that by such means we can draw closer to Him. We looked long and lovingly upon the world's great Sufferer, reading in every gaping wound the story of His boundless love for us. And during the last week of His life—the Holy Week par excellence—we followed the Master from the day when he entered Jerusalem amidst the plaudits of the people, until the hour when He expired on Calvary's summit amidst their cries and jeers and jibes. We saw the heartache of the God-man, as, realizing His impending death, He contrived by the institution of the Blessed Sacrament to remain with us to the end. We saw the Great White Lamb betrayed by the black ingratitude of a Judas; we saw Him deserted by Peter, and the rest; from tribunal to tribunal we saw Him led, a thing of pity, scourged,

crowned with thorns, buffeted, spat upon, dragging His own cross to the mountainside, up whose rugged incline, a love divine drove Him. And there we saw Him pierced for our sins, and hanging betwixt heaven and earth, abandoned by His Father, rejected by the world. Never was death more inglorious, more shameful, more bitter, more undesired, than this death of the Nazarene just outside the Royal City of His fathers. There were, of course, a few loyal hearts—especially the great mother-heart of Mary—that clung to Him unto the end and rendered the last offices of pity and love and humanity to Him after His death. To the world at large, however, His was a failure. He had come to save others. He could not save Himself. He had given life to others, but there He was, dead, so horribly mangled that all thought of life being restored to Him even by a miracle seemed like wildest folly.

But on the third day, as He had foretold, just as the sun was stealing up the arched walls of the heavens, just when the flowers were awakening from their sleep, just when the little birds in their nests were beginning to twitter, just at dawn when all Nature was expectant, feeling the first thrill of another day's life the dead Master by His own power broke the cement of the grave and in the twinkling of an eye pierced the thick stone of the monument and stood, the King of Nature, triumphant over Nature, victor over man, sin and the devil in the morning brightness. No wonder that the world rocked on its foundation with joy and gladness! No wonder that the earth quaked on beholding the Man of Sorrows, risen glorious!

The soldiers who slept about the tomb knew that some unwonted marvel had happened. They had been stationed there by the Scribes and Pharisees to keep away that handful of disciples who in the hour of trial had failed the Master, lest they come and take away His body, and say that He had risen from the tomb. In the hearts of Christ's loyal friends, Mary, His Mother and the other Marys, there was on Easter morning the firm assurance that as He had preached words of truth during His life, so also His prophecy regarding His resurrection would be fulfilled.

Mary, the converted sinner of Magdala, saw the Master under the appearance of a gardener. The Apostles suddenly found Him standing in their midst in the upper chamber of Jerusalem. Peter and John, on hearing the glad tidings of the resurrection, brought them by Mary Magdalene, hastened to the tomb, which they found empty, with the great stone rolled back and the winding-sheets of linen carefully folded. The disciples at Emmaus recognized the Lord in the breaking of bread. Five thousand followers of Christ, St. Paul tells us, beheld the risen Lord. Surely the Christ did come out of the tomb, and did tarry with His own. With them He ate flesh and bare bread. Thomas was allowed to place his hands in the nail-prints, to cure his unbelief and our disbelief.

Christ Himself had appealed to the resurrection as the most irrefragable proof of His divinity and the truth of His teaching. It was to be the "sign of the Prophet Jonas" to His people. Since the resurrection, then, was to play so important a part in the life of the Church, Christ surrounded it with circumstances whose compelling force on our minds none can gainsay. It is with reason, then, that St. Paul says: "Unless Christ be risen again, then is our preaching vain, and your Faith is also vain." St. Paul knew very well that no valid argument could be urged against the resurrection. It was too well established, too well known, to offer any loop-hole to the captious unbeliever. And for two thousand years those who wished to have no part with Christ have tried by every means to explain away in one way or another, or in any way at all, the great central fact of Christ's resurrection from the dead. In every age up to our own time and day men have tried to make the resurrection appear a fraud, a myth or an impossibility. But their hypotheses fly in the very face of facts well established, facts which at the time were received without question by the people who were contemporaries of Christ. Indeed, Christ is risen again, and seeing the miracles of His life and all the circumstances attending His death and burial, it is far easier to believe that the resurrection took place than to credit some of the weird, far-fetched theories which men have invented to explain away.

If Christ's resurrection is assuring, inasmuch as it gives us the strongest argument for our Faith, it is also comforting, inasmuch as it is a guarantee of our own resurrection. If Christ bade us take up our cross daily and follow Him; if He commanded us to crucify the old man within ourselves, with all his passions and concupiscences; if He invited us to follow on the way that He pointed out, which is the way of Calvary, then by His resurrection He proves to us that at the end, when life is over, there is to be a resurrection for all of us; a resurrection from the dark, limited tomb of this present life to the bright, limitless realm of heaven. As Christ rose once from the dead to die no more, so we, too, are destined to come forth from the grave, never to re-enter it. As His resurrection implied a death bitter and cruel, so our resurrection must imply a death, a spiritual death, to ourselves, the world and the devil.

With Holy Mother Church, therefore, let us rejoice on this Easter morn. Let the jubilant Alleluia fall from our lips, for He who was dead has come to life again! He has conquered death, He has opened the gates of heaven. He has merited for us the grace which we need to live out His teaching. By His resurrection He has put the seal of divinity so clearly upon His work that men of good will and common sense cannot but accept it. But He has done more. As by His life and death He has taught us how to suffer, by His resurrection He has given us the one satisfying explanation of suffering. This is the true Easter message, then—joy and gladness at Christ's resurrection, faith in His teaching, and hope that the hard things of this world are but tests of the soul, which is destined to a life in heaven.—W. T. Nechters in Rosary Magazine.



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