

FIVE-MINUTE SERMON

EASTER SUNDAY
RISE WITH CHRIST

"Today we celebrate the glorious feast of the Resurrection, and joyfully we sing: 'Alleluia,' because Christ has accomplished our redemption. I will endeavor to speak to you today of the spiritual resurrection of the sinner, and implore God that He may grant to us the grace to rise from the grave of sin to a new life of grace.

St. Augustine tells us: "All that happened at the crucifixion, the burial, and the resurrection, did not take place only for our redemption, or in order to make us believe these mysteries, but also that we should regulate our lives accordingly." From the Resurrection we should learn that, as Jesus rose from the grave, so should we arise from the grave of sin, begin a new life and persevere until the end. "Christ did not stay in the grave long, and rose in the early part of the morning," said St. Bonaventura, "so should we rise early from the grave of sin, not late, that is, not leave it until the evening of our lives. The wise Sirach says: Delay not to be converted to the Lord, and defer it not from day to day" (Sirach, xiv, 8). There can be no delay more dangerous than the delay in saving our souls. If the sinner returns to God he will receive forgiveness, no matter how severe and how many his faults have been. Therefore do not defer your penance from day to day, but come quickly from the grave of sin. Lazarus, as also the son of the widow of Naim, and the daughter of Jairus, arose from the dead, but died again. Jesus alone conquered death, for after his Resurrection He did not again descend to the grave, but after forty days ascended gloriously into heaven. We should endeavor to follow His example, for we have risen from the grave of sin, by the reception of the Sacrament of Penance, we should not return to the grave, i. e., we should keep our good resolutions, and avoid the occasion of sin. "For as Christ is risen from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also may walk in newness of life" (Romans vi, 4). Christ has given us to understand how wrong it is to fall back into sinful habits after having received the pardon of our sins, for He said to the sick person in Jerusalem: "Behold thou art made whole: sin no more, lest some worse thing happen to thee" (John vi, 14). What worse thing than a sickness of thirty-eight years can there be? Nothing except death. From this we are to learn what we may expect if after repenting of our sins, and receiving absolution, we fall back into our former sinful habits. Even in worldly courts our magistrates punish more severely a criminal who commits the same crime over and over again. David tells us: "Bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days" (Psalms liv, 24). Who are these deceitful men? Those who in Confession pretend to repent of their sins, and who promise to the confessor to reform and to leave off their bad habits, but who soon commit again the very sins they were guilty of before. Some Christians during this holy time clear their conscience and adorn their heart with virtues by receiving the Sacrament of Penance. But how long do they remain so? Some of them scarcely as long as the Easter week, on which they perform their Easter duty. Why, they hardly leave the church when they are accosted by their former temptations and occasions of sin, forget their good resolutions, commit the same old sins, and sacrifice all the virtues that adorned their souls. We may know from experience that if we do not avoid the occasions we will be in danger of committing sin, but little or no attention is paid to this, and the consequence is relapse into sin. Therefore, my dear Christians, allow this experience to teach you to avoid the occasion of sin, so that you may not expose yourselves to the danger of being lost for all eternity.

"If you rise with Christ, seek the things that are above; where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God: mind the things that are above, not the things that are upon the earth. For you are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ shall appear, who is your life, then you also shall appear with him in glory" (Col. iii, 1-4). Amen.

THE FEAST OF EASTER

Christmas is the feast of love, but Easter is the feast of faith and joy. On this day, which so well named "rise" day, we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and, at the same time, with unutterable joy, we salute the dawn of our own resurrection. The Paschal solemnity comes to say to man: Thou shalt not die; the tomb shall receive thee as the earth receives the grain—to germinate in the silence of years and spring forth glorious and immortal. At this time to the pure soul everything speaks of resurrection. Nature, which seems to sleep through the days of winter, clothes herself again with verdure and joy; upon the branches, yesterday so dry, bloom to-day the loveliest flowers; all creation, gladdened with life, seems to say to us: "If God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is east into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?"

Within the Church, on this glorious day, the elaborate decorations recall the joy of this great drama. Instead of mourning and the signs of sorrow, are seen ornaments, beautiful in color and joyful in suggestion; rich embroideries cover the altars; lights and flowers adorn the tabernacle; the bells ring out their most joyous peals, and from the sanctuary arise the heavenly melodies of "Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia."

The firm belief in the resurrection and the eternal life is one of the essential truths of Christianity. Outside the Christian Church death is, and always has been, the king of terrors; but by the resurrection of our Lord and through His love for us, the Christian may look upon death without terror, as the entrance into the true life which is eternal life with Jesus in heaven. In triumph over death, life and the grave we may joyfully cry out: "O death, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting?"

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