



EASTER DAY

Homily of the Right Reverend Dom Jean PATEAU
Abbot of Our Lady of Fontgombault
(Fontgombault, March 28th, 2024)

Salve... Dies prima.
Hail... O first day.
(Sequence, Adam of ST. VICTOR)

Dear Brothers and Sisters,
My dearly beloved Sons,

“**V**ANITY OF VANITIES, and all is vanity. [...] What has been is what will be, and what has been done is what will be done; and there is nothing new under the sun,” wails Qoheleth.^a André Chouraqui translates in a vivid way, “Smoke of smokes, says Qoheleth, smoke of smokes, and all is smoke.” Mankind’s history would thus be nothing but void, nothingness, an endless maze ineluctably going back to square one. From our first parents Adam and Eve’s disobedience, and the murder of Abel, to the last victim of the fratricidal conflicts that ceaselessly bloody the earth, all seems to be nothingness. All seems to be hatred.

a. Qo 1:2.9.

Three days ago, this heavy pall had also descended upon the Lord’s disciples. Today, the day after the Sabbath, the sun has just risen, a sun just like every other day’s sun. On the way leading them towards the tomb where the Lord’s body has been put, Mary Magdalene, Mary, the mother of James, and Salome, are carrying their spices, and their only worry is, “Who shall roll us back the stone from the door of the sepulchre?”^b

b. Mk 16:3.

This stone separating them from the Lord is indeed heavy, heavy with all the evil of human history, especially heavy with this last crime, the death of the Innocent One, the death of Him who had proclaimed Himself Son of God, bread of life, and fount of salvation. Could a man roll back this stone? Yet, behold, the stone has been rolled back. Instead of a corpse, they find a young man clothed in white: “Be not affrighted. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, Who was crucified? He is risen: He is not here. Behold the place where they laid Him.”^a

a. v. 6.

A few humble words, and yet, fraught with a great mystery: what man could not do, God has done it. The hour of reconciliation between God and man has struck. These few words are going to echo from mouth to mouth on the whole earth today: “He is risen.” The Prophet Isaiah had announced:

How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, and that preacheth peace: of him that sheweth forth good, that preacheth salvation, that saith to Sion: “Thy God shall reign!”^b

b. *Is* 52:7.

The prophecy has been fulfilled. Women are its ambassadors. After appearing to Mary Magdalene and calling her by her name, to the disciples of Emmaus, to Peter, Jesus appears last to the disciples: “Peace be to you!”^c

c. *Jn* 20:19.

Smoke of smokes, would all be smoke? No, this day is unlike the other days. This is the day which the Lord has made, the day on which divine peace is poured out on earth, a unique day, an endless day, the day Qoheleth had hoped for without being able to imagine it.

We have just sung, speaking to Christ:

The gloomy bonds of hell have been broken; chaos shakes with fear, crushed by Thy luminous face.^d

d. Hymn
Salve festa dies,
str. 7.

Let us live in the light of this day without end.

Yet, we have to acknowledge that for many men and women, this day will be like yesterday and tomorrow. Such was the case for the contemporaries of the apostles on this Easter morning. Such is also the case for us when we lack faith.

If we consider the situation of the world, the Church, sometimes our families and communities, we may be greatly tempted

to chorus with Qoheleth, “Vanity of vanities, and all is vanity.”^a

Don’t let us tread this way. Don’t let us allow the little music of murmurings, of desperation, play its baleful harmonies in our hearts.

a. Qo 1:2.

On this Easter morning, the Lord offers us His peace, a peace that had been announced by the angels during Christmas night, “On earth peace to men of good will.”^b Proof has been given of this boundless love. He has given His life for us.

b. Lk 2:14.

This peace is the peace the Lord had promised to His disciples, announced by the angels during Christmas night, “Peace I leave with you: my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, do I give unto you.”^c No, this peace isn’t a fleeting peace, a compromise peace. This fecund peace unfolds with the gift of a new life:

c. Jn 14:27.

We were buried therefore with Him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.^d

d. Rm 6:4.

It is our duty to share this peace. “Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.”^e

e. Mt 5:9.

We are therefore going to implore it, in an especially ornate general intercession, for the holy Catholic Church, for the Holy Father and those that help him in his task of government and teaching, for the bishops, priests, and all the ministers, for the conversion of peoples and their quietness, lastly, for our own city, our country and its inhabitants.

On this Easter morning, the Lord invites us to the gift of peace. Which is the member of my family, of my community, which one among my friends, my colleagues, who is most in need of the gift of peace? Our mission is to belie Qoheleth. No! All is not in vain. All doesn’t lead to despair. After the darkness of Good Friday follows the blazing light of the glorious Christ victor of the tomb. And this light wants to shine on my life, too, provided I accept it.

For whom does the Lord call me to become an ambassador of His peace? Nothing new under the sun? No, it shall not be so for him who walks in the light of the Risen Christ.

Not so either for the Blessed Virgin Mary. The evangelists remain discreet on what her presence, her place was during these hours. It is a traditional belief that the Lord reserved for His

Mother His first visit. To her who had not lost peace, the Risen Christ comes and offers an increase in peace. Therefore, Mary deserves the title of *Regina Pacis*, Queen of Peace. She has constituted herself the messenger of this peace, as for instance in l'Île-Bouchard, on December 11th, 1947: "I shall give happiness in families."

May we receive this happiness coming from Heaven, and proclaim it unto the ends of the earth. Then, it will be truly Easter for us, for the world, a passover from death to life, from darkness to everlasting light. Christ is risen. He is truly risen.

Holy Easter. Amen, Alleluia.

