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EASTER VIGIL

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

Credo, I believe.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,
My dearly beloved Sons,

“**D**O NOT BE AFRAID; for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here. For He is risen, as He said.”^a

a. Mt 28:5-6.

Such are the words addressed by the Resurrection angel to the women coming early to the tomb. What the Lord had promised has been realised. The dark and grim outlook in the heart of the women who had come to embalm their Master suddenly blazes with light. After the doubts comes a certainty. He is truly risen.

Such is the core of our faith, the cornerstone of our hope. The Lord’s resurrection bowls over the course of human history. It has bowled over, and still bowls over, our lives. In its light, we perform acts we wouldn’t have performed if we had not been disciples of Christ.

The women believed the words of the angel. On his request, they went and announced the good news to the apostles who were shackled by their fears. The news of the Lord’s resurrection must be received anew. Faith in God’s mysteries doesn’t consist so much in the fact of believing a few revealed truths, as in allowing our lives to be fed by these truths.

With the Church, we have just renounced Satan, his works, and his seductions. We have reaffirmed our faith in God, the Almighty Father, Creator of heaven and earth, in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was born and suffered the Passion, in the Holy Spirit, the holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting.

Yes, we do believe all that. Is that enough? During this holy night, it is not merely truths that come to us, it is Christ, risen and glorious, Christ living forever. Does His life irrigate my own life? Has not time slowly eroded everything? Has not salt lost its taste? Has not the life of grace somewhat faded, perhaps making place for silence?

The encounter with the Risen Christ calls us to be born again, aims at giving us a renewed youth, in the image of these more and more numerous catechumens who are going during this night to profess their faith before receiving holy baptism.

Don't let us be content with a vague religiosity, which is what many men and women of our time profess, at least those who care about their origin and take the time to ask themselves questions about it. The answer they give can be summed up in these few words by Albert Einstein:

My religion consists of a humble admiration for this illimitable superior spirit that reveals itself in the slight details that we are able to perceive with our frail and feeble minds. [...]

That deep emotional conviction of the presence of a superior reasoning power, which is revealed in the incomprehensible universe, forms my idea of God.¹

These lines cannot satisfy us. Between Albert Einstein's god, and our God, there is an infinite distance.

Einstein's god is cold and aloof. Our God is a personal God. He is a God that has taken, and still takes, the initiative of speaking to man, and inviting him to a dialogue, an encounter.

He is a God yearning to dwell in each man, and wanting to introduce him into a communion: "If any one love me, he will

1. As quoted in *The Private Albert Einstein* (Andrews McMeel Publ., 1993), by Peter A. BUCKY and Allen G. WEAKLAND, p. 86.

keep my word. And my Father will love him and We will come to him and will make our abode with him.”^a

a. Jn 14:23.

He is a God who, as a proof of His love, has offered His life on a cross, and keeps offering Himself in the sacrament of His body and blood, in the Eucharist: “Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends.”^b

b. Jn 15:13.

Such is our God, Who in a few hours will call Mary Magdalene by her name, “Mary,” and in a few days will show His wounds and His side to Thomas, the unbelieving disciple. Yes, such is indeed our God, Who to this day keeps calling each man by his name, shows him His wounds, and invites him to forsake his tombs. Who pays attention to His call?

Let us echo the great Jubilee of the 350th anniversary of the Lord’s apparitions to St. Marguerite-Marie in Paray-le-Monial. On December 27th, St. Marguerite-Marie Alacoque met the Risen and living Christ. She saw His heart and received secrets from Him:

My Divine Heart is so inflamed with love for men, and for you in particular that, being unable any longer to contain within itself the flames of its burning charity, it must spread them abroad by your means, and manifest itself to them in order to enrich them with the precious graces of sanctification and salvation necessary to withdraw them from the abyss of perdition.

Not long after that, Jesus’ Heart appears again, “on a throne of flames, more resplendent than a sun, transparent as crystal,” while the wound from the spear shines forth; the heart is surrounded with a crown of thorns, and a cross dominates above.

A second apparition takes place in 1674, on a first Friday in the month. Jesus presents Himself “all resplendent with glory, with His five wounds shining like so many suns.” But especially, asserts St. Marguerite-Marie, “His adorable breast was like a furnace.” Once again, the Lord reveals “His loving and lovable Heart as the living source of those flames.”

The third apparition, the most famous one, occurred in 1675 during the octave of Corpus Christi. Jesus said these words as He was presenting His heart:

Behold this Heart which has so loved men that it spared nothing, even going so far as to exhaust and consume itself, to prove to them its love. And in return, I receive from the greater part of men nothing but ingratitude, by the contempt, irreverence, sacrileges and coldness with which they treat Me in this sacrament of love.

But what is still more painful to Me is that even souls consecrated to Me are acting in this way.

During this holy night, the Lord shows us His face and His heart. To those who seek Him, He offers a measure of His eyes, a measure of His heart, so that in the footsteps of the apostles, they become living witnesses of the Victor of death, of the Victor of all deaths. Through His own death and resurrection, the Risen One invites us to prepare and carry out our own passover. He is our Passover.

May Our Lady, honoured during Easter time under the name of “Queen of Heaven,” guide her children on the safe path of communion with the Risen One, on the path of heaven.

Amen, Alleluia.

