

**HOMILY OF HIS EMINENCE CARDINAL CHRISTOPHE PIERRE
APOSTOLIC NUNCIO TO THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
HOLY MASS OF EASTER SUNDAY
CHURCH OF THE LITTLE FLOWER
BETHESDA, MARYLAND
MARCH 31, 2024**

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Happy Easter! It's good to be with you again, and to share with you the Holy Father's spiritual closeness as we celebrate Easter. Thank you, Msgr. Vaghi, for your kind welcome to me and my collaborators.

“This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad.”¹ These words from the Psalm are fulfilled in the Resurrection. By rising from the dead, Jesus has created a “new day” for us who believe in him. As Saint Paul said in the second reading, we have been “raised with Christ”, so that we are able to “seek what is above”. Our lives are “hidden with Christ in God”.²

Let's unpack what St. Paul means by this. His point is that the resurrection of Jesus, while it promises for us a glorious life after death, is not something that we have to wait for the end of our lives to experience. **Christ's resurrection has the power to change the way that we live *in this life*, here on earth. This happens because of the hope that the Lord's resurrection gives to us, and because of the joy that this hope produces in us.** It is important, as Christians, that the resurrection make a difference in our lives, *here and now*, so that our joy in the Lord may serve to evangelize others.

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What difference, then, does the resurrection make in our lives? A person who is skeptical of the Christian message could produce evidence of how the world has *not* changed as a result of what Jesus has done. Our world is still caught up in countless wars. Human lives are degraded through modern forms of slavery.

¹ *Psalm* 118:24.

² Cf. *Colossians* 3:1-4.

Political polarization prevents us from attending to some of the most urgent needs of the poor and afflicted. Even closer to home, each of us knows someone who is burdened by depression, anxiety, addiction, a frightening health condition, or an inability to see themselves as God's beloved son or daughter. In the face of these and other forms of evil and suffering, a person might take issue with our claim about Jesus' saving power, and ask: *What difference has the resurrection of Jesus made?*

In answer to this question, we could point to the countless works of mercy that continue to be inspired by the Gospel. But it might be more helpful to answer the question – *What difference does the resurrection make?* – by looking into our own hearts. For us who believe that Jesus has died and risen, there is a gift that wells up from within us, alongside faith. That gift is **Hope**. And let us be clear: Christian hope is much more than an optimistic attitude. It is more than simply “wishing that things go well”. The hope of a Christian, in fact, does not depend on things going well. It is not shaken when it sees that there is still evil in the world. Rather, Christian hope is the gift from God by which we know that God's promises are true: that his divine life in us will endure forever.

Hope is a gift that empowers us to stand firm in God's word, when so many things go against his message of peace, unity, and love. Christian hope says that, because God raised Jesus from the dead, he will also raise from the dead those who die believing in him. But if he will raise us from the dead at the *end* of our lives, then he will also affect our lives *here and now*. He will raise our spirits from every temptation to despair. War, famine, polarization, human suffering of all kinds: for us Christians, these painful realities are not evidence that Christ's resurrection has been in vain. On the contrary, it shows that his Kingdom, which is established in heaven, still must undergo a final assault on earth, until he shall come again in judgment and gather all believers to himself. The victory of Christ is not in question. What is being tested is our faith in that victory. And by persevering in hope, we will share in that victory, both now and in heaven.

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When we have Christian hope, we come to experience, deep within us, another gift that comes from God: the gift of **joy**. It is the joy of knowing to whom we belong, and in whose hands our lives are secure. It is a joy that empowers us to act in love, in such a way that others are affected by what they see in us. Again, it is what St. Paul speaks of as our lives being “hidden with Christ in God”. This joy, even when it is quiet and serene, shows to others that there is something in us greater than what is in “the world”. People who experience our joy, and our love, are being affected by the hope that it is in us. In that way, we give witness to the truth of Christ’s resurrection. He is alive, not in some distant heaven, but in *us*, here and now. And his living presence carries us forward in the midst of suffering.

Far from removing us from the cares of this world, our Christian hope and joy impel us to care even more deeply for our fellow human beings – especially the ones who are hurting the most, and who need to know a reason for the hope that is in us.³ From hope and joy, then, arises love: a language that everyone can understand. By being ones who love, we *are* the evidence of Christ’s resurrection. We *are* the change that Jesus has made in the world.

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Brothers and sisters, as Mary Magdalene proclaimed in the *Sequence* of this Mass, “Christ my hope is arisen.” And as we responded, “Christ indeed from death is risen, our new life obtaining.” By the Eucharist that we share, let us be strengthened in the joy of this new life. “This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad.”

³ Cf. *1 Peter* 3:15.