

Living from the Womb to the Empty Tomb

“An Easter Reflection”

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There is joy to be found in the empty tomb, my brothers and sisters.

I've known about the resurrection of Jesus from the dead from my earliest CCD classes, yet I've never really *knew* about the joy that comes from the reality of the resurrection until now. I've come to learn that there is a fundamental difference between knowing about something and then allowing that reality and that knowledge to penetrate your heart. There's a major difference between knowing about the empty tomb and seeing the empty tomb for yourself, and I can say with a deep conviction that I have seen the empty tomb. The reality of the resurrection and the joy that flows from it had been abstract ideas for me for the longest time. At a time like this, such truths can appear to be far from the reality that we face today as the faithful around us are dying alone in hospital beds left and right without the dignity of a proper burial. How can someone possibly find joy in such dark times?

Well, it has taken me a month of me quarantine staring at the reality of death square in the face for me to finally see what it means to find joy in the resurrection.

My brothers and sisters, this simple truth remains even amid this chaos the resurrection has *not* been cancelled. People in America, and all over the world, may be dying everyday but they are *rising* to new life in Christ Jesus!

My brothers and sisters nothing in this world or the next will ever have the power to invalidate the resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ on Easter Sunday. Period.

Father Dominic Foster, T.O.R., a friar from my university, recently gave a homily online about finding hope in the midst of this virus, and his words speak far greater than anything I could ever say:

One thing that you can NEVER take away from us no matter what is going on in the world is that WE HAVE SEEN THE LORD! And this is the foundation of our joy. This is why Christians in the midst of a corona virus can be joyful and yet be rational at the same time. [...] this is not just a coping mechanism, it's not just a crutch, we can be joyful in the midst of all this because brothers and sisters WE HAVE SEEN THE LORD. We have seen His glory. We have seen Him in our lives, and we can testify to His goodness.

There is no power in this world, there is no army, there is no political party, there is no virus, there is nothing in this world that has the power to cancel the resurrection. It's still there. He is still risen. He is still alive. He is still there in the midst of our hearts.

*Masses have been cancelled. The resurrection has **NOT** been cancelled.*

This friar was able to articulate so passionately the truth of my heart that has left me utterly speechless. The reality of the resurrection is the reason why we can find hope and even joy amid these circumstances. Before Jesus entered the world, we were doomed to die and to be separated from Our Lord forever. Through His passion, death and resurrection, death was arrested, and the grave was robbed of its power over us *forever*. Because of this fundamental reality we can find joy amid the most trying

circumstances of our lives because death no longer has a grip on us. We are destined to rise above these circumstances and to rise from our tombs in the footsteps of Our Savior. No matter what happens to us, this simple truth remains: our home is Heaven and we are destined to rise to new life in Christ through the power of the resurrection.

Not only this, but life lived in the resurrection of Jesus changes *everything* for us. It realigns our priorities in life and makes us want to live differently. It wakes us up to the reality of the mortality of our bodies and the immortality of our souls. Now more than ever the world is beginning to wake up to the reality that every human life is sacred and worth protecting and worth saving. Doctors, nurses and other healthcare workers are now running into hospitals as if they were burning buildings in a race to save lives. We stay in our homes with the conviction that our action (or, rather, inaction) now serves to protect the lives of the most vulnerable in our society. **This is the essence of what it means to be pro-life: valuing and protecting human life at all stages. Whether the world knows it or not, humanity is living out this pro-life message in total solidarity right now. What a grace from God for our times!**

Above all, the reality of the resurrection opens our eyes to the reality of what this temporal world really is: the womb that prepares us for our eternal home in Heaven. Christ's resurrection means that death is nothing more than our birth into eternal life. There is power in the resurrection of Jesus, and nothing can take that away from us.

This is how Saint Paul was able to remain joyful while locked in a prison cell. This is how countless saints of the past were able to remain joyful without masses and sacraments available to them. This is how we can remain joyful today while remaining in our homes during this quarantine no matter the outcome.

So, COVID-19, you can cancel our masses, but you can't steal the source of our joy because we have seen the Lord and He is risen.

Go look in the empty tomb and see it for yourself.