



Archbishop of Montreal

Homily
Sunday, April 12, 2020

Easter Sunday - The Resurrection of the Lord - Year A (Jn 20, 1-9)

Jesus Christ is risen! The Lord is risen! He is risen, indeed!

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If we can say this again today, it is because 2,000 years ago, the risen Jesus showed himself to men and women. He did not show himself to all of them, but to his apostles and to certain disciples, and only to them. But after their experience of the risen Jesus, they spent the rest of their life to proclaim his resurrection: The crucified one is resurrected! He is alive!

From generation to generation up to the present day, the witnesses announced and announced again that Jesus is risen! But only the disciples and the apostles of the first generation really saw him. The passing on of this wonderful news continues by personal testimony. It is the credibility of this testimony that lets us believe that Jesus crucified, a historical event in itself, is truly risen! The resurrection of Jesus is an event in history, but at the same time, it is an event that transcends history and goes beyond history.

There is also another way to see the risen Jesus. It is not to see the risen Jesus in person, but it is to see a sign of Jesus, it is to see a sign that Jesus is risen. For most of us, we can only see such a sign, as most of us cannot see the risen Jesus in this life. But we know that we will see him in heaven. But in this life, we can only see signs.

When Peter and John arrived at the tomb, they entered it. Peter entered first, he sees and there it stops. He sees that the tomb is empty, but that is all. But when John enters the tomb following Peter, we read in the Gospel that he saw and believed.

Did John the Apostle see the risen Jesus? No, but he saw a sign! A sign of his resurrection. What sign did he see? He saw the linen that had wrapped Jesus' body and the cloths that had wrapped his head, and they were still there. Someone might have taken off the linens and carried out the body, but it was not like this. They were still there! The lines were still there, in their place!

The linens were lying there. Why? Because the body of Christ is risen, his body passed through the lines by the power of the resurrection! This is a dazzling sign! Jesus is risen, and John saw a sign in these linens that were lying there and had stayed in their place. He recognized the sign that Jesus was resurrected. He believed that Jesus was resurrected.

A little later, together with the other apostles and some disciples, John will see the risen Jesus who shows himself before them. But at the moment in the empty tomb, just seeing the linens placed on the ground was enough for him. This simple sign was enough for him to understand that Jesus was resurrected, to believe that Jesus is risen.

At some point in our lives, we are living in the midst of the world and are called that we, too, become signs of the risen Jesus for those around us. We are called to experience in our life signs of the resurrection of Jesus.

What are the signs in our life that let us see that Jesus is risen? What are the signs that allow us to say: "I saw a sign and I believe. I believe that Jesus is risen." These signs can become visible first in our own life.

In which moment can we recognize them? Consider your experience, reconsider your experience. Maybe you find there a specific moment in your life when you were hurt and you were not able to forgive. You then addressed Jesus and said: "Lord, I cannot forgive. I cannot even want to forgive. Help me! Help me so that I can forgive."

In the presence of the Lord by your side, you found strength in your soul and the love and mercy that lets you forgive. The presence of the risen Jesus has a real impact in our life, it comes with real consequences because Jesus is at work! Jesus is at work in our heart, he is at work in our life.

Even when we open our heart to the risen Jesus, we will not be able to see all that Jesus does for us! It is good that we are not able to see it all, for if we saw everything that Jesus does for us, we could not handle it, as the love of God is infinite. If it were necessary, said Saint Theresa of Avila, that we felt in our body in this life all of God's love, all of the life of the resurrected one, then we could not handle it. It would kill us!

But we will see him in heaven, when we will have all eternity for the experience, when we will be ready to see him face to face and when we will finally live by his side. But already in this life, we can already see the effects of God's presence in our heart, in our life. For example, we can discover his presence in the events taking place around us.

Going through this pandemic that affects all of us together, seeing examples of solidarity each day, seeing persons who give generously, we see a sign that God is at work, that Jesus is present at the heart of the world. God is at work when he acts directly in events. God is at work when he acts directly in our hearts. God is at work when he works through us. God is at work when he acts through the generosity of people.

Someone can love very much, and even if it seems that he does not believe very much, the simple fact of this love is a sign that God is at work in his heart. Jesus Christ is risen! Our life is full of signs that show us how much Jesus Christ is truly present in our life: to calm us, to comfort us, and to guide us! We cannot open our heart to him without being transformed by Jesus Christ.

On the other hand, we can also be afraid of Jesus Christ! We can be afraid of the resurrection. Maybe, at the bottom of it all, we are afraid that Jesus will ask us to change our lives. He might ask us to improve certain things in our lives. He might ask us something of us or lead us on a path that we hadn't considered or were not yet ready to prioritize.

Perhaps, this could be a path towards vocation to the consecrated life. Perhaps, it is a path to a vocation to marriage, for we know that marriage is a vocation. To respond to the vocation of marriage, we have to decide that we seek married life. We know how demanding marriage is, we know that it requires giving one's life definitively, without ever taking back on our commitment.

The Lord can give us the grace that strengthens us, that encourages us to say 'yes,' no matter in which way we are called. A generous 'yes,' an honest 'yes,' and a confident 'yes,' be it to the sacrament of marriage or another way his love calls you.

But maybe we are struggling with the loss of a loved one. In this case, we feel alone, distressed, and our soul is said and feels as if we were dying. In such a time, we must pray frequently, we must continue to pray, and we must pray again. Right now, we cannot even have funeral services for our dead, but we can continue to pray for them and we continue to pray without ceasing for all intentions that we keep in our heart.

Perhaps you have experienced the peace that Jesus Christ gives us out of pure grace. For Jesus Christ has the power to offer us his peace. The first words that Jesus spoke when he appeared to

his disciples and apostles after his resurrection were: “Peace be with you.” Nothing can stand in the way of Jesus Christ giving us his peace. Not even death could prevent this. Nothing can prevent Jesus Christ from giving us his peace. Each time when you feel anxious or worried, ask Jesus Christ and say: “Lord, I feel anxious.” Just share with him what troubles you and he will give you his peace.

Be not afraid to entrust it to the Lord. “I am worried about the future. I am worried about my family. I am worried about the health of my grandparents and my parents.” The Lord will provide you his peace. He will give you his peace so that it will comfort you, he responds to our prayer by bringing peace to the hearts of those for whom you pray.

In the Gospel, we see people that go to meet Jesus and ask him, “Lord, heal me,” but we also see others who speak of someone who is sick to Jesus. Those who speak to Jesus about a person needing healing also find healing for this person, even though it was not this person him or herself who asked to be healed. Instead, someone else interceded, someone else asked Jesus to heal them. And Jesus healed them.

When we pray for ourselves, Jesus is certain to respond to our prayer, but he also responds to our prayer when we pray for others. The time in which we are gives us many occasions to pray and many intentions to pray for. Let us take the time to pray not only for ourselves but let us also take the time to pray for the whole world. Pray for all families. Pray for all of society. Pray for all people who live alone and those who are worried, and let us not forget to pray for all those who have been impoverished by the crisis of this pandemic.

We can entrust ourselves without fear to Jesus who gives us the strength of spirit that we need to move forward, to him who gives us the strength to live. It is the risen Jesus Christ who enters into our heart. We can entrust ourselves to him without reserve, we can truly count on him.

Do not hesitate to ask him for the strength to live and the strength to love. Let us also ask him to hold us in his trust. If, for one reason or another, we should have the impression that the night will not end, if we find ourselves facing the unknown, Jesus stays by our side and he tells us repeatedly that living and loving is worth any suffering.

Jesus Christ is risen! The Lord is risen! He is risen, indeed!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+ Christian Lépine". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

† Christian Lépine
Archbishop of Montreal