

Homily: 3rd Sunday of Easter: Cycle B: 2024: Acts 3: 13-15, 17-19; Ps 4; 1 Jn 2:1-5: Lk 24:35-48

“The Joy of the Resurrection and its Effect on Our Life - Exteriorly and Interiorly”

1. We are called like the Apostles to be joyful witnesses to the Resurrection.

Remember spiritual joy is the gift of the Holy Spirit in which we experience the reality of God’s personal love for us as individuals and as a people. To be a Christian witness is to proclaim the truth about Jesus to all those around us. *How can we do this effectively in all that we say, think, and do?* We need to grow ever deeper in our interior union with the Lord because it is only by growing in prayer that we come to know the Lord, on a personal level. This is wonder of the Catholic spiritual life. **Do we realize there are stages of development in relation to our prayer life?** Just as we grow physically from infancy and childhood to adolescence and then to adulthood, so are we called to develop similarly spiritually. It’s not a one-shot deal of accepting God into our life - but an ongoing process. How does this occur? Through the power of the Holy Spirit building upon our efforts to grow. Grace building on nature. If we are generous with God we will grow in our interior union with God; if we are lackadaisical or indifferent we won’t. **The Easter season is a good time to take an honest look at our spiritual life.** We are called to go beyond reading our prayers, to meditating on the sacred mysteries of our Faith, to entering into contemplative union with the Lord of Life. I would recommend a couple of things to read, wherever we are in our spiritual development to help us with this process: the 4th section of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, and two little books by Fr. Thomas Dubay, *Prayer Primer* and *Deep Prayer-Deep Conversion* from Ignatius Press; also, the little book *the 3 Ways of the Interior Life* by Fr. Reginald Garrigou La-Grange – which leads to his masterwork: the 2 volume work *The 3 Ages of the Interior Life*. The spiritual journey is the most exciting journey in this life, and yet how few humans are aware of the full dimensions of it. We need to learn more.

2. When we start to grow spiritually, we become aware of the need to put our Catholic Faith more consistently into practice in daily life: which is living the new life won for us by Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit which we first receive

in our Baptism when we become adopted sons and daughters of our Heavenly Father. Then our spiritual & moral choices as Catholics, in daily life, is no longer simply a matter of following the “*rules of the Bible and the Church,*” but are the tangible way we show our love for God and neighbor, and witness to the fact that **Jesus alone** is the Savior of the world and the Catholic Church is the ark of salvation for humanity. *If we love the Lord we keep His commandments,* as St. John reminds us. We don’t “make it up as we go” as modern ppl tend to do in the error of moral & spiritual relativism which Pope Benedict famously said leads to “*the desert of meaninglessness*”. What a privilege to be part of the Community of Faith, which Jesus Himself began on the rock of St. Peter the first Pope and the other apostles, and continues to show humanity the **Way** that leads into the fullness of the **Truth** which if embraced to ultimate **Life/Salvation,** through the power of the Holy Spirit working through the Magisterium of the Church and the lived Faith of us all, particularly the saints. **The saints are so important as witnesses because they show us that God can transform the human person completely, in real earthly life, if we let Him, despite human weaknesses, into the very image of His own love, truth and goodness.** All the things that we humans tend to focus so much time and energy on: our careers, our relationships, our possessions, our wants and desires - in the end, don’t amount to anything if we don’t grow in holiness/interior union with the Blessed Trinity. We don’t realize the Lord’s way is the better way until we give it a shot; **until then we are in a kind of spiritual fog** or falsely think “everything is a sin”. Once we truly commit to following the Lord in all areas of our life, the attractiveness of sin is greatly diminished, for we see it for what it is: rebellion against God and against goodness, and truly leading to unhappiness, destruction, and death. Then we are filled with **interior joy and peace** which even flows into our exterior life at times and is shown in a joyful and peaceful countenance, so that when we do sin, esp. if seriously, it immediately makes us very troubled, and we develop a desire to go to Confession ASAP, instead of putting it off for who knows how long in pride/shame.

3. **Growth in the interior life leads to a greater self-knowledge.** As we grow in prayer, we come to see things in our life that go against the Lord's designs and we sincerely want to change them - since we now know how much He truly loves us! At this point, we will say like the saints: we would rather die than be separated from the Lord, and truly mean it! **The problem of the division between professed faith and lived reality in the lives of so many Christians today is primarily a result of lack of a serious interior life.** If we don't know the Lord on a personal level, what is the basis for wanting to follow Him which involves carrying the Cross and going against the grain of the world? It's not going to happen! Thus, the need to work on our interior life. **Be generous with the Lord:** allow His grace to transform your heart, mind and will. Take time out daily to spend with Him and be silent with Him. Ask the Holy Spirit to lead you into deeper prayer in this holy interior quiet: *Mass (daily if possible), Rosary – regular and 7 Sorrows, the Chaplets of Divine Mercy & St. Michael, meditating on a page of the Bible each day, reading good spiritual books and spending time before the Blessed Sacrament:* check out our Wednesday & Friday 3 p.m. Eucharistic Holy Hours here. Additional helps are *a frequent reception of the Sacrament of Confession*, which is like a regular spiritual tune-up, and *being careful what we read, watch on television, and look at on the internet.* Just as we are called to watch what we eat on a physical level, for good health, God calls us to watch what we consume spiritually, so that we don't harm our souls. And as your pastor, I am willing to help you to personally cultivate a deeper spiritual life if you are interested. Just give me a call or send me an e-mail. It's not that complicated in reality; it just involves the challenging task of re-prioritizing our lives on some level – just making the time for it, and being consistent in that regard. As St. John Paul II once said to Bishops and Priests, *“Your first duty as pastors is not projects and organizations, but to lead your people into deep intimacy with the Trinity.”* That's what it is all about! Please pray that through the intercession of Our Lady Guardian of the Faith, the we priests always make that our first priority in our own lives and in guiding the people God has entrusted to our pastoral care, for His glory and the salvation of many souls. God bless you. †