

Brothers and Sisters,

Alleluia! Jesus has been raised from the dead. Our Easter Triduum has reached its culmination. But what does this mean for us? How are we supposed to be transformed by the last few days?

Let's reflect upon what we have just gone through this Triduum culminating in our Easter Celebration. On Holy Thursday we celebrated the gift of two sacraments, that of the Eucharist and that of Holy Orders, specifically the priesthood. And these are gifts. They are gifts to the Church, and indeed they are gifts to the whole world. They are, gifts that only make sense in light of what was to follow, the death and resurrection of Jesus.

On Good Friday, we see the drama of our salvation begin to take its shape. And it does so in a most unusual manner. We see Jesus, the one believed to be the messiah, led away by the chief priests and Roman officials to be sentenced to death, tortured and then killed on a cross. To make this tragedy even worse, this happens as he is betrayed and abandoned by his closest followers. The apostles sit and watch from a distance as people taunt him, jeer at him. The religious leaders mock him, asking him to come down from the Cross if he is truly the Son of God. And he doesn't come down. He dies.

Had that been the end of what occurred, we would not be standing here today or any other Sunday for that matter. But what happened was quite astounding. On the third day, three women went to the tomb and found it was empty. Now this must have been extremely distressful for them. Imagine that you had a loved one die, and three days later you learned the body has vanished. You would be distressed, and rightly so. You would probably call the police and begin to figure out what happened to the body. That is what was going through the heads of the women who found the tomb empty.

Then two men in dazzling white appear, and ask them "Why do you seek the living among the dead? . . . He has been raised."

Well, if this is true, what does this mean about the events of the past few days? And what does this mean for us going forward.

Well, what it means is a lot of things, 2000 years of contemplating the resurrection has still not exhausted its meaning, and 2000 years of more contemplation won't get us any closer to exhausting the meaning of the resurrection.

But at the core, we do know what this means. It means that God has intervened in Human history in a way that has forever changed it. Jesus is revealed as not only one who was a prophet, powerful in both words and deeds, but as the one who has power even over death.

If he had come down from the cross, okay it would have been another great miracle. And sure, some people would have come to believe in him. But they would believe in him for his power. Or perhaps they would believe in him out of fear. But this is not the type of relationship that God is seeking. What God is seeking is a relationship based on love. We are not to fear God in the sense that we do what he says for fear that he will do something really horrific to us if we don't. No. To say that is to miss the mark about who God is, or what God is asking of us.

What the resurrection shows us is that we have a God who loves us. And, as we all know, when someone is truly in love with another, the response they are seeking is to be loved in return. That is what the resurrection shows us. It shows us the depths of God's love.

By suffering and dying and rising from the dead Jesus demonstrates to humanity how badly God wants to be in a loving relationship with us. He wants this so badly that, despite the fact that we mock him, that we torture him, that we deny him and yes, even that we kill him, he still responds to us with love. God is saying nothing you do, even if you kill me, will prevent me from loving you. He's saying, 'My love for you is stronger than any other power in the world, even the power of death.'

If we are moved by Tom Cruise going up to Rene Zellweger in the movie Jerry McGuire and saying, "you complete me." How much more should we be moved by a God who has shown us the depth of his love?

This love has forever changed the world. This love has shown us what it truly means to love – that is, it has shown us that to love is to give of one's own self for the sake of others. Without this love, we would not have been motivated to respond to Haiti and Chile after being devastated by earthquakes. But this love has changed the world. It has given us an unprecedented concern for victims. In the past, nations would not have rushed to the aid of an ailing nation. No, they would have said now's our chance, let's invade. But the love Christ showed us by giving his life, has led entire nations to give some portion of their life to those in need. In the past, places of violence might be places people would never want to visit. Yet because of this love, Christians from our area gathered together on Good Friday to pray at such places in the Beechwood neighborhood, to be a beacon of hope in the face of needless violence.

The resurrection has indeed changed the lives of individuals and the world as a whole. As we celebrate the resurrection, lets us take the time to contemplate how the great love of God the love that cannot be stopped by any force, not even death, has changed our lives, so that like Peter, we too can go home, amazed at what happened.