

Easter Sunday 2018 SML

In the beginning of the public life of Our Blessed Lord, in the first throws of apostolic success, the Apostles left their nets, boats and customs tables and flocked to Him as the One who would restore Israel, who would restore the throne of David. However:

- ✓ Judas saw it as a successful financial venture;
 - ✓ James and John saw it as an opportunity to sit at His right and at His left in earthly glory;
 - ✓ The others, jealous of James and John, quarreled for the first place at table.
- The power to cast out devils,
 - the thrill of miracles,
 - to companion such a noble person Whose words took them to new inner personal heights,
 - and finally the glory of his triumphal entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday,
- made His death seem so remote, if not impossible.

Even though they heard Him speak of His resurrection, even though they heard Him say that like another Jonah He would be in the belly of the heart of the earth for three days and three nights,” (MT 12:40), and even though He said in

three days He would rebuild the temple of His body, the Apostles still adhered to a narrow, human and worldly understanding of life and death. That is why Peter was scandalized at the very mention of His death. That is why, when Holy Week came, and death began to raise its ugly head against His holy life, they, as He predicted, dispersed like sheep when the Shepherd was struck.

Judas felt that since death was inevitable, he would profit on His death as He had profited on His life. So he sold Our Blessed Lord for thirty silver coins.

Peter, James and John, who saw Our Blessed Lord when His face shown like the sun and His garments were white as snow at His Transfiguration, now slept in the garden when that same face sweat drops of blood. In the four trials before the Jewish and Roman judges, before:

- ✓ Annas,
- ✓ Caiaphas,
- ✓ Pilate
- ✓ and Herod,

not one single Apostle was there to speak a word in His defense. No, Peter warmed himself by a fire with a throwback to the days when he was not a fisher of men, but a fisher of

fish, and cursed and swore like a common fisherman that he never knew Him.

None of them, save John and Our Blessed Lady were at the Cross, for they thought all was lost. In the last moments of His life, those at the foot of the cross whispered He was dying. A moment later they sighed He was dead. Death had won its victory.

Yet in three days, each of them would learn the tremendous lesson of the Resurrection that every follower of Our Blessed Lord would understand until the end of time.

The Resurrection was a fact. Our Blessed Lord said He would rise again and He did rise again. Yet it took some convincing for they were not expecting a resurrection.

- ✓ On Easter Morning, the women went to the sepulcher not to meet the risen Lord, but to embalm His body.
- ✓ When they found the stone rolled away, they did not suppose a Resurrection, but that someone stole His body
- ✓ The message of an angel did not inspire them with faith, but with fear and trembling.
- ✓ And when they first saw Him they thought they were seeing a ghost.
- ✓ Mary Magdalene thought He was the gardener
- ✓ The two disciples on the Road to Emmaus did not recognize Him until He broke the bread.

- ✓ When they told the other disciples, they did not believe them.
- ✓ Thomas would not be convinced until he put his finger in His Hand and his hand into His Side.

Yet if you compare the conduct and behavior of the Apostles before the Resurrection with the way they acted when the Holy Spirit gave them the fullness of belief in the Resurrected Lord, what force so transformed the souls of the Apostles so as to make:

- ✓ the degraded so venerated
- ✓ the ignorant so wise
- ✓ the egotistical so devoted and
- ✓ the despairing so hopeful?

What force so transformed Peter who cursed and swore like a common fisherman, in the light of the fire that he knew not the Man - into one who could startle the hearts and thrill the souls of the learned with the message of Jesus whom God raised from the dead?

What force so transformed Saul, the greatest enemy of the Church into St. Paul, her greatest champion?

What force so transformed that crude, homeless smelling group of Galilean fishermen into fearless martyrs who preached the Gospel to the ends of the earth?

There is only one force in the world which explains how:

- ✓ habitual doubters like Thomas
- ✓ greedy tax collectors like Matthew
- ✓ dull men like Philip
- ✓ impetuous characters like Peter
- ✓ gentle dreamers like John
- ✓ and the rest sea faring men reeling under the shock of a crucifixion

could be transformed into men of fire, ready to suffer, dare, and if need be, die – and that force they proclaimed everywhere. Nothing short of a Resurrection. They were witnesses of a Resurrection. He who was dead – lives. And all but the Apostle John gave their life in testimony to that belief, and men do not generally give their life for a hallucination . . . to answer the cynical.

For the cynical have tried everything . . .

- ✓ they tried science, which fed their minds but starved their hearts
- ✓ they tried beauty but it eventually faded

- ✓ they tried youth but they grew old
- ✓ they tried doubt, but they became confused
- ✓ they tried wealth but found themselves poor
- ✓ they tried power but found themselves weak.

The only thing they have not really tried is the divine love of Our Risen Lord who is true God and true man.

- ✓ Somewhere on earth His absolute Truth still abides, for He said, “I am the Truth.”
- ✓ Somewhere on earth His Divine Life flows into hearts like fresh springs from an eternal fountain; for He said, “I am the Living Water.”
- ✓ Somewhere on earth His Calvary is prolonged through space and time; for He said, “I am the Bread of Life.”

And where that beautiful somewhere is, one billion souls on this earth know. That beautiful somewhere is the Catholic Church – a Church that would never be one billion strong had He not risen from the dead; for He said “I am the Resurrection.”