

Doctrinal Homily of the Easter Vigil

A manifold joy, today moves me to repeat the word of the prophet: *"This is the day which the Lord has made; come, let us exult and rejoice in it"* [Psalm 118:24].

There has never been before a similar day, nor will there ever be one that resembles it. For, this is the great feast, the pride of all its related feasts; great is the joy that is bestowed upon the Churches today. Come in peace, O new day which has dissolved away the power of darkness. Come in peace, O day so unlike the day before yesterday, when the power of the old night was rent asunder. Come in peace, O luminous day bearing excellent news. Come in peace, O consoler of the afflicted, gladdener of the sorrowful, gatherer of the dispersed, the one who brings the distant nearer, the one who makes the vexed to rejoice, encourager of the frightened, sower of the good seed in the ears of the Disciples. Come in peace, O day without evening, and happy morning which has no sorrowful evening. Come in peace, O day into which death has not entered, and rising-up which will never meet with a fall. Come in peace, O firstborn of days, for both worlds have been embellished with your gifts. Death has gone down and life has risen up; Sheol is bound-up; Baptism is open; the left has become void and the right is resounding.

The day before yesterday, the Shepherd was beaten and his lambs were dispersed. Today, the wolves have fled and the sheepfold exults. The day before yesterday, Judas accepted bribery, Caiaphas gave counsel and was hearkened to. Annas had made accusation, the scribes were agitated, Pilate gave judgment, Our Lord was bound to a pillar, Andrew had fled, Simon had denied, John was off, Thomas had hidden, James was struck with wonder, and all the Disciples fled in all directions.

But today, Caiaphas is ashamed, Annas is blamed, Judas is hung, the money is rejected, the scribes are silent, the leaders of the congregation have buried their faces in shame, the Levites rebuke each other, Pilate is struck with wonder, the agitators and the soldiers are no more, the gathering of the wolves is dispersed, the Shepherd converses with the ewes, and the flock smelled his fragrance was warmed with excitement. Mary exults, Salome rejoices, the Magdalene carries the good news of peace, the Disciples raise their heads, the Apostles come out of their hiding places, Simon and John run to the grave, Matthew and Bartholomew exulted in their joy. Andrew and James forget their afflictions' Thomas confesses, Pilate praises, the way to the grave is resounding and that to Golgotha is barren. Grief passed to the left and consolation rose up from the right.

The door of the sepulcher became the bride chamber of the One that was killed. Here, let us all cry out and say: *"O death, where is your sting? O Sheol, where is your victory?"* [I Corinthians 15:55].

Today, the watchers received bribery and said that the Disciples have stolen Him while they were sleeping. Afterwards, He appeared to Mary Magdalene and the rest; and when the Apostles were confident, they were saying: "We know that Christ rose up from among the dead, and He will not die again, and death has no power over Him."

Therefore, being called to His joy and invited to this celebration, let us embrace one another in charity, kiss each other in love, and give one another peace—the peace which is without deceit, the peace which is not hypocritical, the peace without duplicity, the peace not like that of Iscariot, who received hanging as his reward, the peace which our Redeemer sent to the company of the Apostles in the Upper Room. Peace be with you collectively—for peace is the cancellation of ancient enmity. Wherefore, because we have been called for peace and have gathered together for peace as is the custom every year, let us say: "The Resurrection be with you, and the life which is in Christ." Our Lord liberated us from death and transformed us from mortals to immortals—from Adamites to Christians, from terrestrials to celestials, from animal souls to spiritual souls. Instead of being contentious, He made us peaceful, He turned the agitators into peacemakers, the furious to the sweet, the revengeful to the merciful, the audacious to the simple, the puffed-up to the modest, the proud to the humble, the oppressors to the thankful, the squanderers to the fasting, the drunk to the abstainers, the corrupt to the chaste, the lazy to the studious, the sinners to the righteous, the wicked to the just, the evil to the good, and so let us love one another with all of our heart. Because it is to this peace that we are called, my beloved, clap your hands together, praise highly, exalt greatly, sing spiritually to the One who rose up today from among the dead, and who by His resurrection restored life to us all, Amen.

And as to that thief, the son of our race, to whom He promised that on that day he would be with Him in Paradise, with him may we be made worthy to receive His heavenly manifestation, and to have participation in His heavenly kingdom; Amen.