Easter Forever!

April 9th, 2023

During this time of year, the Catholic world observes the most important solemnity of the liturgical year: the confession of faith in the RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST and, with it, the beginning of an approximately seven-week liturgical period, called "Eastertide."

In these lines, I reflect on two aspects and implications that this celebration has for all humanity, for the Christian world, and specifically for our North American society. The first refers to the very etymology of the Spanish word for Easter, or "PASCUA," meaning "NEW LIFE" and, the second, the meaning of ABUNDANT LIFE that the Easter season entails. Because although it is the largest annual liturgical feast of Catholic Christians, the celebration of Easter contains a universal message, that is, a valid message for every man and woman who longs for a better life and world, regardless of their geographic location, race, religious creed, political ideology, socio-educational level, social position, etc.

The Spanish word, *Pascua*, comes from the Hebrew word (*pesah*) meaning "passage." With this word, the ancient Israelites recalled the celebration (Ex 12:11) of the new life that gave them liberation from Egyptian slavery through their "passage" across the Red Sea and their journey through the desert, until they reached the "Promised Land."

The Christian "Easter," or "*Pascua*" refers to one's "passage" from death to new life, a "passage" from "darkness to light" that offers, to every man, the life of Jesus and his gospel. The life of Jesus clarifies the meaning of our respective existences. In Jesus' lifelong project, our own are illuminated. His struggles and longings are ours. In his sufferings, we find reason in our own. In his commandment of love (1 Jn 3:14), the life and mission of every man who comes into this world acquire meaning.

The original meaning of Christian Easter for all is the passage to a NEW LIFE. And how very relevant, urgent, and necessary this Christian Easter message is for our American society, right here and now!

We are surrounded and distressed by a thousand forms of violence and death in our homes, streets, and schools. We are overwhelmed by unemployment and the near future, diseases and political uncertainty, drug use among young people and the enormous toll these drugs bring upon their families, the loss or mutation of traditional values brought on by prioritizing having over being, the pursuit of pleasure and power at all costs, regardless of the means and as the ultimate goal of human existence, etc. This panorama that makes impossible individual existence and the coexistence of all in society, cries out – urgently – for a transformation, change, a *"metanoia,"* a NEW LIFE; brought about by people transformed for the reconstruction of new, renewed, more humane and supportive institutions and communities.

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Secondly, and inseparable from the first point already noted here, the confession of the Resurrection of Jesus means a triumph of LIFE over death, a passage from failure to victory. Thus, Easter is synonymous with an "abundance of life" and life as the final word on the destiny of man, of every man who comes into this world.

The evils listed above and many more, which as individuals and society afflict and distress us daily, demand that each one of us, moving from the bad to the good, from the inhuman to the human, from the perfectible to the best, from lies to truth, from errors to honesty, from twisted and convoluted to righteousness in conscience, in words and deeds, let us build – through that PASSAGE, that transformation, that novelty in our lives, social spaces of ABUNDANT LIFE.

We must build abundant life that, within our nation, is manifested in the world of law and politics, in the world of economics and inter-community and interpersonal relations, in the world of art and science, in the execution of our professions and our daily tasks, in the world of entertainment, recreation and sports, in our religious experiences, etc.

Our personal, family, and social life takes place amidst a thousand forms of death. Each of us (personally and socially) suffers from deprivation, yearns for better living conditions, harbors the hope of better days that mean days of greater justice and equity, days of greater and easier access to social opportunities, and times of greater solidarity, freedom, and fraternity. We all long for "the new heaven on the new earth." We would say that this is the hope that marks our present and that motivates our very existence and everything we do.

The very diverse manifestations of a Culture of Death are contradictory and scandalous in societies where the majority – as in our case – publicly confess ourselves as "Christians." These manifestations clash and contradict the fundamental plan of God in Christ: his Resurrection, an abundance of life against the abundance of death.

Therefore, the celebration of Christian Easter is not a mere Catholic liturgical celebration, but a heritage that belongs to all humanity, a summons to all and a daily task in our lives: to become new and renewed men and women, able to transform ourselves and actually transforming ourselves into more just, solidary, and humane people, and, through that, likewise transforming our institutions and social structures.

May Easter be, then, every day. May we pass every day from the old to the new and from scarce, petty, and precarious forms of life to ABUNDANT LIFE! Happy Easter!

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