



Easter Sunday: 4th April 2021

Reflection / Homily – Mgr Daniel McHugh

“Exult, let them exult, the hosts of heaven”

The other day I went to the Post Office to post a letter with important papers, so I asked to have it “recorded delivery”. I happened to say to the person “with it being Holy Week, I am anxious it gets there before Good Friday.” The lady said “nobody here knows anything about Holy Week; they don’t know anything about Easter, about Jesus, about the Resurrection... we Muslims know about Jesus; we respect him. Here Easter is all commercial.” Well, sadly, I had to agree “Jesus Risen from the Dead doesn’t get much of a look in”. Well, we have to do something about it! What do we Catholic Christian people do about making this Holy Season come alive for us, and share it with others? You note, in my initial greeting to the lady in the Post Office I had mentioned Holy Week and that was deliberate. I thought she might have said “What is Holy Week?” and that would have given me the opportunity to say something about the special days; Palm Sunday, Holy Thursday, Good Friday and of course Easter Sunday.

It is up to us to take the opportunities that are wide open to us to make the wonder of this season known, but it needs to begin with us, our own celebration of the Resurrection of Jesus at Easter.

It starts as a community marking the Feast Liturgically:

We are a bit restricted in terms of singing due to the regulations in place to deal with the Virus. But, there are some things we can do even there, and one is to bring the use of recorded music into Church (and at home?). In our VLOG “The Burning Bush” we have played the Hymn “Christ the Lord is Risen Today... Christ the Lord is risen on high, now He lives, no more to die”. A beautiful hymn that shifts the mood from one of penance to celebration. I think we are also allowed to have a soloist to sing Easter Hymns for us.

Another mark of Easter is of course the flowers in Church; I was conducting a Funeral in a local Parish this last week as the Priest was not well due to the Virus. The lady in the sacristy was talking with me about her planning for the Easter flowers in the Church. The amount of planning was incredible, and the way she had others involved in getting the special flowers she needed. So, don’t take those flowers for granted! After the whole season of Lent with no flowers displayed, the flowers are a mark of the new life we have in Jesus Risen.

Then, we have the new Paschal Candle lit on the Sanctuary to highlight Christ the Light of the World. The Pascal Candle is one of the most sacred and enduring elements in Christianity; in normal times it is from the fire at the Easter Vigil. You will note it is adorned with symbols: the most important being the lighted flame coming from it, a symbol of Christ, light of the world; often there is a Cross on the candle representing

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Christ's Redeeming Sacrifice; and the Greek letters, Alpha and Omega, the first and last letters of the Alphabet, representing Christ as the beginning and end of all things. The candle, which represents Christ Himself, is placed on a special Pascal Candle stand and is often adorned with spring flowers and it remains on the Sanctuary for the 50 days of the Easter Season. Then it is placed next to the Baptismal Font and lit for Baptisms, the sacrament through which we receive new life, a rebirth in Christ. At Funeral services it is a reminder of the Resurrection of the Dead and testifies to Christian certainty of the Resurrection of the Dead and the life with Christ in the world to come.

Sadly, this year, again due to the restrictions imposed by the Coronavirus lockdown, we will not be hearing the Exultet sung in many Churches. It is sung at the Easter Vigil with the Pascal Candle, and has its origins way back in the early years of Christianity; a Hymn in praise of the Resurrection of Jesus. It begins "Exult, let them exult, the hosts of heaven exult...sound aloud our mighty King's Triumph." You can hear the opening part sung in our Burning Bush VLOG.

We can't be silent! The Risen Lord Jesus is with us on our journey of Faith. We can have a candle and flowers at home too as we celebrate with a special meal on Easter Day.

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