



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

GENERAL AUDIENCE

St. Peter's Square

Wednesday, 28 March 2018

[Multimedia]

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Good morning!

Today I would like to pause to meditate on the Easter Triduum, which begins tomorrow, in order to examine a bit what the most important liturgical days of the year represent for us believers. I would like to ask you a question: which is the most important celebration of our faith: Christmas or Easter? Easter, because it is the celebration of our salvation, the celebration of God's love for us, the feast, the celebration of his death and Resurrection. And for this reason I would like to reflect with you on this feast, on these days, which are days of Easter, until the Resurrection of the Lord. These days constitute the celebratory remembrance of a *great unique mystery: the death and Resurrection of the Lord Jesus*. The Triduum begins tomorrow, with the Mass of the Lord's Supper and concludes with Vespers of the Sunday of the Resurrection. Then comes "Easter Monday" to celebrate this great feast: an extra day. But this is post-liturgical: it is the family celebration, society's celebration. It signals the fundamental steps of our faith and of our vocation in the world, and all Christians are called to experience the three Holy Days — Thursday, Friday, Saturday; and Sunday — understandably —, but the Sabbath is the Resurrection — the three Holy Days as, so to speak, the "matrix" of their personal life, of their community life, as our Jewish brothers and sisters experienced the Exodus from Egypt.

These three Days reintroduce to the Christian people the great events of salvation performed by Christ, and thus they are projected into the horizon of their future and reinforced in their commitment to witness in history.

On Easter morning, retracing the steps experienced in the Triduum, the singing of the *Sequence*, which is a hymn or type of Psalm, will make solemnly resound the announcement of the Resurrection; and it goes like this: “Christ, my hope, has risen: He goes before you into Galilee”. This is the great affirmation: Christ has risen. And in many communities of the world, especially in Eastern Europe, people greet each other during these days of Easter not with “good day”, “good evening”, but with “Christ has risen”, to affirm the great Paschal greeting. “Christ has risen”. In these words — “Christ has risen” — of moving exultation, the Triduum culminates. They contain not only an announcement of joy and hope, but also an appeal to responsibility and mission. And it does not end with *colomba* [traditional Easter cake], eggs, celebrations — even if this is beautiful because it is the family celebration — but it does not end this way. This is where the journey begins, that of the mission, of the announcement: Christ has risen. And this announcement, to which the Triduum leads, preparing us to welcome him, is the centre of our faith and of our hope; it is the core; it is the message; it is — a difficult word, but it says it all — it is the *kerygma* which continually evangelizes the Church and which she in her turn is invited to evangelize.

Saint Paul summarizes the Paschal event in this expression: “Christ, our paschal lamb, has been sacrificed” (1 Cor 5:7). As a lamb. He has been sacrificed. Therefore — he continues — “the old has passed away and the new has come” (cf. 2 Cor 5:17). Reborn. And this is why, from the beginning, people have been baptized on Easter Day. This Saturday night, here in Saint Peter’s too, I will baptize eight adults who are beginning their Christian life. And everything will begin because they will be born anew. And with another concise formula Saint Paul explains that Christ “was put to death for our trespasses and raised for our justification” (Rom 4:25). The only one, the only one who justifies us; the only one who makes us born anew is Jesus Christ. No one else. And for this reason there is nothing to be paid, because justification — becoming just — is free. This is the greatness of Jesus’ love: he gives life freely in order to make us holy, to renew us, to forgive us. And this is the very core of this Easter Triduum.

In the Easter Triduum the remembrance of this fundamental event is celebrated with full appreciation and, at the same time, renews in the baptized the meaning of their new condition, which the Apostle Paul always expresses in this way: “If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above ... not things that are on earth” (cf. Col 3:1-3). Look on high, look to the horizon, broaden the horizons: this is our faith; this is our justification; this is our state of grace! Through Baptism, indeed, we have risen with Jesus and we have died to the things and logic of the world; we are reborn as new creatures: a reality that seeks to become true life day by day.

If a Christian truly allows himself to be cleansed by Christ, if he truly lets himself be stripped by Him of the “old man” in order to walk in a new life, although he remains a sinner — because we are all sinners — he can no longer be corrupted; the justification of Jesus saves us from corruption; we are sinners but not corrupt; one can no longer live with death in his soul, nor be a cause of death. And here I must say something sad and painful.... There are false Christians: those who say “Jesus has risen”, “I have been justified by Jesus”. They are in the new life, but live

a corrupt life. And these false Christians will meet a bad end. A Christian, I repeat, is a sinner — we all are; I am — but we have the certainty that when we ask forgiveness the Lord forgives us. The corrupt pretend to be honourable people but, in the end, there is blight in their heart. Jesus gives us new life. A Christian cannot live with death in his soul, nor be a cause of death. Let us think — to avoid going any farther — let us think at home, let us think about the so-called “Christian mafiosi”. But there is nothing Christian about them: they claim to be Christian, but carry death in their soul and convey it to others. Let us pray for them, that the Lord may touch their soul.

A neighbour, especially the least and the one who suffers most, becomes the concrete face to whom we must give the love which Jesus has given us. And the world becomes the place of our new life as risen ones. We have risen with Jesus: on our feet, with heads held high; and we can share the humiliation of those who still today, like Jesus, are suffering, are naked, are in need, are lonely, are dying, so as to become, thanks to Him and with Him, instruments of ransom and of hope, signs of life and of resurrection.

In many countries — here in Italy and also in my homeland — there is the custom on Easter day when one hears, one hears the bells, mothers, grandmothers take the children to rinse their eyes with the water, with the water of life, as a sign of being able to see the things of Jesus, new things. This Easter let us abandon ourselves to cleansing our soul, cleansing the eyes of our soul, so as to see beautiful things and do beautiful things. This is wonderful! This is precisely the Resurrection of Jesus after his death, which was the price paid to save us all.

Dear brothers and sisters, let us be willing to properly experience this now imminent Holy Triduum — beginning tomorrow — in order to be ever more deeply immersed in the Mystery of Christ, who died and rose for us. May we be accompanied on this spiritual journey by the Most Holy Virgin, who followed Jesus in his Passion — she was there, watching, suffering — she was present and united to Him under his Cross, but was not ashamed of her Son. A mother is never ashamed of her child! She was there, and received in her Mother’s heart the immense joy of the Resurrection. May she obtain for us the grace to be interiorly engaged by the celebrations of the coming days, so our heart and our life may be truly transformed.

As I leave you with these thoughts, I express to all of you my most heartfelt wishes for a happy and holy Easter, along with your communities and your loved ones.

And my advice to you: on Easter morning take your children to the font and have them rinse their eyes. It will be a sign of how to see the Risen Jesus.

Special Greetings

I greet the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors taking part in today’s Audience, particularly those

from England, Ireland, Finland, The Netherlands, Ghana, South Africa, Australia, Japan, Indonesia, the Philippines and the United States of America. I offer a special greeting to the delegates taking part in the Seminar organized by the Vatican Observatory in preparation for the forthcoming unispace+50 Conference. May this Holy Week lead all of us to celebrate the Resurrection of the Lord Jesus with hearts purified and renewed by the grace of the Holy Spirit. God bless you!

I offer a special thought to *young people*, to *the elderly*, to *the sick* and to *newlyweds*. Tomorrow begins the Easter Triduum, fulcrum of the liturgical year. May you reflect on the price the Lord paid in blood for salvation. May Good Friday teach you patience in the moments of the Cross, and may the Sunday of the Resurrection fill you with the joyful victory Christ won over all things that oppose life and good in the world.