

Reflection for Easter

‘Alleluia, Alleluia!’ This ancient acclamation derives from the Hebrew expression (via its Greek transliteration), meaning ‘Praise the Lord.’ For over forty days since our Lenten journey began, we have refrained from uttering the ‘A’ word! Now, on this most solemn feast in the Church’s calendar, we hear this joyful acclamation resounding over and again! Yes, praise the Lord, for He has won for us salvation; His definitive victory over the powers of darkness, sin and death is also our victory. As the Exsultet of the Easter Vigil exclaims: ‘O happy fault, that earned so great, so glorious a redeemer. Exiled from an earthly paradise, we are now granted admittance to a heavenly kingdom, where we will reign as coheirs with Christ. In an ancient homily for Holy Saturday used for the Office of Readings: *“Arise, O man, work of my hands, arise, you who were fashioned in my image. Rise, let us go hence; for you in me and I in you, together we are one undivided person. For you, I your God became your son; for you, I the Master took on your form, that of a slave; for you, I who am above the heavens came upon the earth and dwelt under the earth!”*

Many, perhaps, feel like the global COVID19 pandemic has robbed the Christian faithful of the ability to celebrate Easter properly. We can neither worship God in our churches, nor can we even join together with family and friends to celebrate as we normally would. Being one of nine children, I’m used to Easter being a carnival of food, drink and laughter! My parents always host the festivities on their property outside of Ballarat. Can you imagine twenty-seven grandchildren scrambling for the spoils of this epic outdoor Easter-egg hunt? And yet this year, the garden will be empty of eggs, people and laughter. Understandably, there is so much disappointment and frustration, especially for the faithful during this Triduum. Perhaps we don’t feel like we can rejoice.

Throughout two millennia of Christianity, the Church has faced countless persecution, conflicts, disease, famine, and a litany of other trials and tribulations. Yet in every age the Church has with a clear and unfaltering voice, sung out her ‘alleluia’ on this glorious solemnity of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. We too, cannot make the year 2020 the exception. We can and should rejoice this Easter, because whatever inconveniences and sorrows we suffer, we know that Christ’s victory is already accomplished. How quickly was the bitterness of Good Friday transformed into joy on that first Easter Sunday! How quickly the pain and anguish of Calvary was forgotten as our Lord stood before the apostles gathered in the upper room! Let us remember in our present distress that the source of our joy as Christians is not borne out of worldly consolation or material self-sufficiency, nor, on the other hand, does the world have the power to rob us of the joy we find in Christ. Today we rejoice, because on this day our eternal redemption was accomplished; today the exiled children of Adam became children of God and coheirs with Christ. The purview of the Christian’s vision is infinitely wider and grander than this world. This enables us to look beyond the passing troubles of this world to see the wonder of God’s plan for us: eternal life with him in heaven. Yes, *“God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, so that whoever believes in him might not perish, but might have eternal life”* (John 3:14). This is the central message of our faith that gives cause to our great ‘Alleluia.’

Let me conclude by wishing all the parishioners of St Patrick’s, Lilydale, St Brigid’s, Healesville, St Aloysius, Yarra Glen, and Our Lady of the Snows, Marysville, every joy and heavenly blessing for the Octave of Easter. Your intentions are in my prayers daily. Might I also encourage you all, while respecting the current social distancing regulations, to find ways to be present to your family, friends and neighbours, especially those who you know

might be feeling isolated, lonely and vulnerable at this time. Let's all do what we can to make the love of the Risen Lord radiate in our hearts and homes. Alleluia!

Fr Francis Denton