

My friends in Christ, in a span of ten short days we have commemorated the Lord's passion, death, and Resurrection, and our celebration of the Resurrection has continued all through the week during the Easter Octave, which concludes with our celebration today of the Lord's Divine Mercy.

The Mass of the Lord's Supper, which marked the beginning of the Lord's Pasch – Passover from death to new life...the passage of a pilgrim people on pilgrim's journey, muddling through this mortal coil towards halls of heavenly realms...the passion (the suffering) that Jesus endured for love of us: our redemption from a fallen, broken world; the salvation of our souls; our warm embrace in the holy presence of God at the end of days and the beginning of life eternal.

And the Veneration of the Cross on Good Friday, how all of world history (summarized for us in a ten-minute crash-course of ten *centuries* of western civilization!) was prompted by Providence so as to bring us to that one precise moment, that singular time and place of the birth of Christ, the Word-made-flesh Who came to dwell among us, Whose whole reason for being born at all (Whose whole reason for coming to us in the first place) was to *teach* us and to *show* us how to live...to *serve* rather than *be* served...and above all else to *die* for us that we may have life and that in abundance.

And then at last, there is Easter. The Lord is risen; truly, He is risen. He lives now forever, and thus, He is here to stay. Even though it certainly seems at times that all the world and even we ourselves definitely want so much to make Him go; that was, after all, what the cross was all about, for it was fallen humanity what nailed Him to the Cross, our sinfulness what slaughtered Him, our brokenness what broke Him. We try to be against Him, and yet we fail; we nailed Him down, but He rose again; we killed Him, but He lives; we buried Him, but the tomb is empty. And so, faced with such phenomenal cosmic power, we fall on bended knee – converted of mind and heart and soul – so that *now*, rather than *fight* the Good News or else to *deny* it, we actually *embrace* it, and we *proclaim* it! The Lord is risen – *truly*, He is risen!

The Easter proclamation of the Lord's Resurrection – it is the crux of the Good News, the very heart of the Gospel. Jesus Christ is risen; Jesus Christ is Lord – indeed, as Doubting Thomas, now of course *Saint* Thomas, exclaims in today's Gospel passage: my Lord and my *God!* He is our most loving and *merciful* God, Whose Divine Mercy, as I say, we celebrate this weekend, concluding then our week-long celebration of the Easter Octave.

The Good News is thus; we, now, are given the task – sent forth on mission – to share that Good News, to proclaim this Gospel with others. Evangelization: it is not *merely* the theme of our Parochial Year For Evangelization; rather, it truly is our God-given mandate...our mission...but in very truth, our supreme joy and eager delight to share the Good News with those around us – with all the world... When the Seahawks won the Super Bowl in 2014, how many of us were just about *exploding* with excitement and sharing our joy with absolutely *everyone?* And, when Gonzaga made it all the way to the championship game last year, how many of us had become the very definition of the crazed fanatic, once again sharing our excitement and joy with anyone who would listen?

And with *this* Good News – *the* Good News – that the Lord is risen...that death has lost its sting...that there really is cause for faith and hope for *us*, that we, *too*, are given the solemn promise of life eternal in halls of heavenly realms...where now is our explosion of excitement? Where now is our supreme joy and eager delight to share *this* News with *everyone*, with *anyone* who would listen?

It is a truly *radical* proposition, that we are as joyful and as eager to share *the* Good News as we would share the news of some sporting event – but there it is. As radical, perhaps (and as *crazy*, perhaps) as the Lord calling us to holiness and perfection; to be holy as God is holy...to be perfect just as our heavenly Father is perfect.... A radical call to missionary discipleship calls us to a radical call to holiness. And our answer to that radical call to holiness begins with our faithful response to His grace, our openness and willingness to be molded into His image after His likeness, to become His faithful and enduring friend in the most profound meaning of friendship; indeed, to love Him

with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our mind, and with all our strength, so that *then* we can be empowered *fully* to love our *neighbor*.

And love of neighbor can *never* be complete and will *always* be judged and found wanting if we withhold from them the Good News that the Lord is risen, that He is *truly* risen.

We are often reminded that we need to strive to *see* Christ *in* others, that we might then find it easier to be loving and charitable toward them.... But what if we were to strive *just* as fervently to *be* Christ *for* others? What if we were to try to make it easier for *others* to *see* Christ in *us*? Can we be a window for others through which they can more easily see and behold the love of Jesus for them, the *mercy* of Jesus for them? Can we honestly say that, *through* us, people whom we meet are able to experience a profound encounter with our loving and merciful God? If we can at least do *this*, then we are well on our way toward answering that God-given mandate to proclaim the Gospel to all the world. And maybe this can begin with a paradigm shift in personal attitude, a change in mindset of how we view the world and our place in it. What if, for example, we were to go to work, or school, or the grocery store, to concerts and games and school plays, and our Christian mindset was always this: “I go forth now into mission territory!” Wow! If we would only have that attitude, then I for one would have no doubt at all that Spokane would be *instantly* on fire with the faith! But what is it that *keeps* us from this...and *why*?

I propose that a big reason *why* is simply this: fear. We *fear* putting ourselves out there, for we *fear* rejection, ridicule, the slightest possibility of failure. And if ever someone asks us questions about our faith, about why we are Catholic, we *fear* giving them an inadequate answer – of offering them a dumb response, and so timid that we “pass the buck” and refer them to someone else (to a priest for example) – as if to do so means that we are doing something wrong, of somehow having failed as Catholic Christian. Far from it! In fact, when folks ask us questions about our faith, then

clearly there must be *something* in us that inspired them to ask us in the first place! They saw in us a Catholic Christianity that they liked, to which they were drawn, and they just *had* to ask us about it!

Saint Peter writes, “Give a reason for the hope that is in you.” And perhaps we assume that we are to be prepared to give an *argument* as our “reason” when in fact we are to be prepared to give faithful and joyful *witness*. That “reason” of which he speaks *can* be an argument...but it *also* simply can be a story from our own lives, a personal testimony of our own personal encounter with Christ, the risen and living Lord; and our story, our testimony of personal encounter (our *witness*): it *can* be simply our faithful attendance at Sunday Mass...participating in Eucharistic Adoration in prayerful, peaceful, counter-cultural defiance of the rushing busy-ness of daily life...going to confession, thus embarking on a humble pilgrimage to the chapel of mercy...lighting a votive candle in quiet prayer for a deceased loved one or for a family member or friend in need...praying the Rosary, or just *one* decade of the Rosary *with* someone and *for* someone...wearing the scapular, the Miraculous Medal, the crucifix.... Because it is *witnesses* who are most needed at present and who are most effective in any evangelization effort; Pope Blessed Paul VI said: people listen “more willingly to *witnesses* than to teachers, and if [they *do* listen] to *teachers*, it is because they are *witnesses*.”

And so, may it be that our renewed embrace of the Good News of the Lord’s Resurrection would inspire within us new vigor, strengthened faith, replenished hope, and firm resolve to go out to all the world and proclaim the Gospel. And may the Lord Himself Who freely gives of Himself to us both in the Word proclaimed and in the Sacrament received, nourish and sustain us with His very Self, forming us in His own image and after His own likeness, thus to transform all of us into the active and intentional disciples whom He needs – whom the whole world needs – to share His Good News with *everyone*...for His greater glory and for the salvation of all souls. Praised be Jesus Christ, now and forever!