

Easter A

“Easter Happened”

Fr. Frank Schuster

Something happened! My friends, something happened. Up to this point, we thought our lives follow the predictable pattern of the universe, we born, we live and we die. And then, surprise, something happened, the tomb was empty.

I share this every year, but it bears repeating. The Christian faith is unique from all other religions in that the veracity of our faith relies solely on a historical event. And the resurrection of Jesus is a historical event. For me, what is most striking, is when Jesus was arrested, the Gospels are in agreement that the disciples fled. It is striking to me because if you want to start a new religion that is not the best propaganda to be putting out there. So this must have been obviously true and well known at the time because all four gospels report this.

My friends, something happened this day to convince the disciples to return from hiding to the public square, risking their necks, even giving their lives, to proclaim Jesus Christ has risen from the dead. And what made this message compelling was, these disciples were not extremists. They were fishermen and businessmen. They had lives they could have gone back to. Their message wasn't very political either as they weren't looking to start a war or revolution. Quite the contrary, they came out of hiding with a message of God's love and a commandment to love, even those who persecute them. They risked their necks for this message, why? Because, something happened, they saw the risen Christ. Life will never be the same again.

The resurrection of Jesus was very inconvenient to the emperor of Rome because he claimed to be a deity himself and didn't like the competition. The resurrection of Jesus was inconvenient to the religious leaders of Jerusalem at that time because they were offended by Jesus' claim to be the Son of God. This is why if life insurance policies existed during this time, being a Christian would have voided your policy. For centuries Christians were persecuted, even killed. In some places of the world, this happens even today. We have relics of three martyrs in our altar here of saints who died proclaiming the risen Christ. Why did they do that?

It boils down to one reason: Easter Happened. Up to this point, we thought our lives follow the predictable pattern of the universe, we born, we live and we die. And then, surprise, something happened, the tomb was empty. Jesus rose from the dead, alleluia. What does this mean? Life has changed forever.

Life has changed because our focus in life should no longer be centered solely on this world. With the resurrection of Jesus and his promise to raise us as well, we need to look at this world in context of the world to come. This has implications on how we live our lives in service to God and the people in our lives. The world is no longer about me but about Jesus Christ who died for my sins and rose for my salvation. We are baptized in this faith and remember our baptism because life is no longer just about being born, living and dying. Life now includes rising from the dead. Why? Easter happened.

My friends, it is so easy to live our lives spiritually asleep to the implications of this message. Easter reminds us to wake up, arise from our sleep, and renew our baptismal promises. If we need to deepen our relationship with God in our prayer life, now is the time. If we need to repair a relationship in our family life, now is the time. If we need to find spiritual meaning in our relationships at work, now is the time. If we need to discover deeper meaning in our personal spiritual journey and vocation, now is the time.

Christians, Easter invites us to consider all the areas in our soul that feel dead right now, like a corpse in a tomb. Easter invites us to open our hearts to the life giving waters of Jesus who alone has power over sin and death. We are invited to welcome the Holy Spirit into the areas of our life that have flat lined, in need of defibrillation. We are invited to rejoice in thanksgiving to our Father in heaven that our lives do not end with the crosses we carry. Everything in this life is a preparation for the eternal life in store for us. This hope begins with the insight we celebrate today, death is not the end, Easter happened, and will happen for us, to the praise and glory of God. Alleluia!