

HOMILY OF ARCHBISHOP CHRISTOPHE PIERRE, APOSTOLIC NUNCIO
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“This is the day the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad.” (Ps 117:24) This holy night, we sing these words with the Psalmist; this is truly the work of the Lord – life without end! St. Caesarius of Arles described this day as the “day in which the Lord fills the soul of each person with joy and exultation and in which He makes the face of the earth splendid with the beauty of springtime.”

In these past days, we have contemplated the passion and death of Jesus. We have seen life itself enclosed in a tomb. A stone was rolled in front of that tomb and a great silence has covered the whole earth. This silence is full of questions, awaiting answers: For the Apostles, “How could we have fled? For Peter, “How could I have denied Him?” For the women, “*Who will roll back the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?*” Perhaps they all asked, “Why did He not come down from the cross? Why did He allow Himself to be treated that way? Why didn’t He use His power as He had done in the multiplication of the loaves or the calming of the storms?”

These questions – without easy answers – could not have but increased their gloom. Jesus had tried to prepare them – through his Transfiguration and His Last Supper Discourse – but they remained unprepared to enter with Him into the Darkness of the Cross and Tomb. Something still needed to die within them – the last residues of worldly hope and a worldly kingdom.

Now early in the morning, the women came to the tomb, and seeing the stone rolled away, they entered. They entered into the Mystery. Their questions would be answered, but according to the criteria of God. The answers could only have been revealed by God. Man does not have the power to take away the darkness of the tomb or to give life after death. In the human order, death has the last word, but the word that comes after that – the word of the Resurrection – is spoken only by God. It is the word of Life, evoking a great cry from the whole Church: “Alleluia!”

Our world is full of questions, and many today lack hope and are afraid of the future. The young, refugees, and migrants wonder whether they will even have a future. Many wonder about their vocation: will they find their true love and will it last? Others are trapped in cycles of fear surrounding illness, suffering, isolation and loneliness. This makes the Easter message – The Lord is Risen! – all the more urgent.

The Risen Lord gives us hope and light in the darkness of the night. He transforms this holy night, as we heard in the *Exsultet*: “*O truly blessed night, worthy alone to know the time and hour when Christ rose from the underworld! This is the night of which it is written: The night shall be as bright as day, dazzling is the night for me, and full of gladness.*”

Yes, Christ transforms this night into a *night of grace*. At the beginning of the liturgy, this basilica was entirely dark and silent, inviting us to a deeper awareness of our sin and its consequences, of our frailty, of our inability to save ourselves. How many times have we searched for answers to life’s problems among things that could not give us life? On our own, we could not escape from our wounded condition.

Only God could pull us out of the darkness and transform it. Only God could roll away that which kept us enclosed in darkness. That is what happened this night! In the Resurrection, the true light burst forth in the darkness, giving us the light of hope and the fire of love. At the beginning of creation, God said, “*Let there be light*”, but this was a mere anticipation of the light of Easter, reflected from the face of the Risen Lord – a light which banishes the darkness – a light that comes from heaven!

Through his radical love for us, Christ took light from heaven and brought it to us. Jesus rose from the tomb and radiated the pure light of God to us, inaugurating the new creation – a new, more radiant light is now upon us. The Lord draws us into the new light of the Resurrection and conquers the darkness. Indeed, *this is the day, the Lord has made!* In fact, the Risen Lord is the new day for all of us!

At the beginning of this liturgy, we chanted *Lumen Christi*, and there was but one light, which could be born only from God. Little by little, this light was spread from one candle to another, until this basilica was illuminated. The flame of faith in Christ the Risen Lord, which we first received in baptism, must be shared by all – one person to another – and must go out to the ends of the earth. It is flame that not only gives light to dark situations but also provides warmth – the warmth of God’s love, especially where the hearts of men and women have grown cold or indifferent.

The Pope wants a missionary Church – a Church that goes forth to the peripheries, to pockets of darkness and despair, bringing the healing light of Christ to others. The women of the Gospel were instructed to go to the disciples and Peter and to tell them that the Lord had been raised and that He would go before them to Galilee. This is a reminder that in all our efforts to share the Good News, Jesus precedes us and invites us to announce the joyful message to all whom we meet: Death does not have the last word. He is Risen!

This is the Church’s mission: to spread the flame of faith – to announce to everyone that in the Risen Lord, we find the true answers to all our questions. Let us listen once more to the words of the *Exsultet*, making them our own: “*May this flame of faith be found still burning by the Morning Star: the one Morning Star who never sets, Christ your Son, who coming back from death’s domain, has shed his life on peaceful humanity, and lives and reigns forever and ever.*”

To you here present and to your loved ones and to all who have joined us through the media, I wish you a Blessed and peace-filled Easter!