

+ EASTER SUNDAY

Homily of the Right Reverend Dom Philip Anderson, Abbot of Clear Creek Abbey
April 4, 2021

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,
My very dear sons,

In his powerful discourse delivered on Solomon’s porch near the Temple of Jerusalem following Pentecost, Saint Peter plumbs the depths of misery and joy that constitute the Paschal mystery: *[Y]ou denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you. But the author of life you killed, whom God hath raised from the dead, of which we are witnesses.*¹ Could there ever be a more striking paradox than this capital punishment inflicted upon the very Creator and Sustainer of all life? Has there ever been a more astonishing reversal than the subsequent triumph of the Prince of life over death itself? And, like Saint Peter, we are witnesses of this great mystery, the mystery of life.

Now we are experiencing the season of spring, with its welcome warmth, after the cold of an intense winter. This pleasant weather will pass, it is true. Even in spring there will be rainy days and unpleasantly cold ones. Yet, through the beauty of the fairest days of spring our soul is given the image of a happiness that would be without fail, and it enchants us—an eternal Eastertide. This is expressed well in the Song of Song, the Canticle of Canticles of Solomon.

Arise, make haste, my love, my dove, my beautiful one, and come. For winter is now past, the rain is over and gone. The flowers have appeared in our land, the time of pruning is come: the voice of the turtle [dove] is heard in our land: The fig tree hath put forth her green figs: the vines in flower yield their sweet smell. Arise, my love, my beautiful one, and come...²

The incomparable Church Father, Origen, comments on this passage of the Canticle, saying:

Forthwith...let the Word of God speak first to this fair and noble soul, to whom He has appeared by means of her bodily senses—that is, through her reading of Scripture and hearing of doctrine—as it were, through the windows—, and to whom He has shown how tall and great He is; in order that He might speak to her in the words just cited, leaning towards her, and then calling her to come out of doors and, being removed from the bodily senses, to cease to be in the flesh.... Then also will she hear “the voice of the turtle-dove” which surely denotes that wisdom which the steward of the Word [Saint Paul] speaks among the perfect, the deep wisdom of God which is hidden in mystery.... And, because this word of command...seals the work of resurrection, she is invited into the Kingdom, as being now, by virtue of the resurrection, brighter and more splendid, and is bidden: “Come, my sister, my fair one, my dove, for the winter is

¹ Acts 3:14-15.

² Cant. 2:10-13.

past”—winter here denoting surely the storms and tempests of this present life and the blasts of temptation with which human life is racked.³

Indeed, Easter is God’s perfect springtime that triumphs over the bitter cold of a world plunged in sin. The hymn we sang during the procession awhile back, *Salve Festa Dies*, says the thing as well as it could be said, no doubt, outside of Holy Scripture. Here is a translation, which hardly does the liturgical poetry justice, but does give an idea:

Hail, great day, in all time most worthy of veneration, for today God conquered Hell while holding his place in heaven. 1. Look, the Spring-time beauty of the world bears witness: giving back its Lord it gives also all gifts. 2. For everywhere the groves with leaves and the meadows with flowers lend their support to Christ as he triumphs over dismal hell. 3. Seeing the human race submerged in the depths, you became yourself a man, in order to rescue mankind. 4. The dire chains of the law of hell have lost their power. Chaos quakes to see itself overwhelmed by the appearance of light.⁴

Through the intercession of Our Lady, through her Immaculate Heart, may we learn to listen attentively to this voice of the mystical turtle-dove, that is to say that of Christ, the Bridegroom of the Church, especially during this feast and paschal season of the year of Our Lord 2021. There are other voices abroad.... There are those who would rule the present world through an insidious sort of social engineering, by the tricks of international high finance and of high tech communications, and now by health mandates that run contrary to our Christian faith and to common sense. Through laws that undermine the family and society we seem to hear an echo of those who cried out to Pontius Pilate to do away with the Lord of life: “Crucify him, crucify him!”

The Sovereign Pontiff has given us the year of Saint Joseph and the year of the family. Relative to the family he reminds us that it is,

[A] sign and image of Trinitarian love and of the covenant between Christ and the Church. It is the ever-new Word of the Gospel.... And it is a demanding Word, which seeks to free human relationships from the slavery that often disfigures them and renders them unstable: the dictatorship of emotions, the exaltation of the temporary that discourages lifelong commitment, the predominance of individualism.... In the face of these difficulties, the Church reiterates to Christian spouses the value of marriage as God’s plan, as a fruit of his Grace, and as a call to live fidelity and gratuitousness to the fullest.⁵

Let us be fully awake to what is at stake and, especially, to the beauty of our Holy Catholic Church, though she may sometimes seem sullied and disfigured like Jesus on His Cross. When all is said and done, when the story of our lives has run its wild and winding course, when all the dramas have been lived out and all the consequences of our acts told and every debt paid, when history shall have played itself out to the end through the seasons of the heart and mind of man, with all the wreckage and ruin, when every Apocalypse shall have spent its fury and its mystery, the enemy having been definitively trodden underfoot, what will remain is—very simply—life, Divine life, eternal life, the very

³ Origen, *The Song of Songs Commentary* (New York: The Newman Press), pages 239-245.

⁴ Trans. Pluscarden Abbey.

⁵ Message of Pope Francis, March 19, 2021.

being of one God in Three Persons, shared with those who will be saved, all of us here as we hope, through the Incarnation, Passion, and Paschal victory of Our Lord, the Prince of Life. And then there will be nothing left to say but “Alleluia.” Amen.