

**Homily for Mass for Residents of St. Joseph's Home
Springfield, IL**

**Tuesday of the Octave of Easter
March 29, 2016**

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My dear brothers and sisters in Christ, just two days ago, on Easter Sunday, as the Church was joyfully celebrating the great feast of the Lord's Resurrection, we were informed of the sad news that one of the most prominent figures in the Catholic Church in America had passed away. Mother Angelica, the beloved foundress of the Eternal Work Television Network, departed from this life at the age of 92, having struggled for many years as the result of a stroke that she suffered in 2001.

Mother Angelica was a woman who had great faith and who worked tirelessly to respond to what the Lord had asked of her. In the face of seemingly insurmountable odds, she always approached each roadblock with a childlike faith, trusting that if the Lord had requested it, He would also provide the means to achieve it. Countless members of the EWTN audience were treated to her wit and sincerity as she spoke from the depths of her heart about her love for the Lord and the Catholic faith.

We see in Mother Angelica a wonderful example of somebody who was a witness to the Resurrection, both in life, and now in death. As we listen to various accounts surrounding the Resurrection in our readings this week, we have many examples of what being a witness to the Resurrection looks like. In the case of Mary Magdalene, we hear of the new sense of purpose that she gains after encountering the risen Lord. She goes from weeping in sorrow at the loss of Christ to joyfully announcing the Good News to the disciples. In the Acts of the Apostles, we hear of the boldness of the apostles, those men who, at the time of the Passion, fled in fear. They are new men, transformed from their encounter with their risen Savior and strengthened through the gift of His Spirit that He sent upon them on the day of Pentecost.

While much attention is given to the active works undertaken by those witnesses to the Resurrection, works that would continue to announce to the Lord the message of the victory of sin over death, they are not the only ways in which to be a witness to the Resurrection. We witness to the Resurrection any time we let our faith in Jesus Christ guide our thoughts, words, and actions. This witness can be lived in extraordinary ways, as in the case of the Apostles, Mother Angelica, and many other

saints. But those remarkable events are just scratching the surface of lives lived totally dedicated to following Jesus. Less visible, but not less significant, are the many quiet ways in which the faithful live their faith in the Resurrection on a daily basis, especially when the road before them is uncertain and filled with suffering.

In his Apostolic Letter *Salvifici Doloris* (On the Christian Meaning of Human Suffering), Pope Saint John Paul II wrote:

Christ does not answer directly and he does not answer in the abstract this human questioning about the meaning of suffering. Man hears Christ's saving answer as he himself gradually becomes a sharer in the sufferings of Christ. The answer that comes through this sharing, by way of the interior encounter with the Master, is in itself something more than the mere abstract answer to the question about the meaning of suffering. For it is above all a call. It is a vocation. Christ does not explain in the abstract the reasons for suffering, but before all else he says: "Follow me!" Come! Take part through your suffering in this work of saving the world, a salvation achieved through my suffering, through my cross. Gradually, as the individual

takes up his cross, spiritually uniting himself to the cross of Christ, the salvific meaning of suffering is revealed before him.¹

It is a faith firmly rooted in the Resurrection that allows one to witness when in such a situation. We profess in the Creed our belief in the Resurrection of the Body - not just that of Christ, but ours as well! Our Catholic belief that our bodies will be raised up in glory on the last day is the reason why the Catholic Church discourages cremation of the dead. We honor the bodies of the dead with Christian burial in the expectation that they will be raised up in glorified form to live forever with Christ in His heavenly kingdom. Because of this belief, we know that any sufferings we face here are only temporary. We also believe that our sufferings are not without meaning, for when they are united with those of Christ, they become a powerful means for good in the Church.

It is from that viewpoint that we can look to those final years of the life of Mother Angelica as being a particularly powerful expression of her being a witness to the Resurrection. Mother Dolores Marie, the abbess of the community where Mother Angelica lived, offered an insightful reflection on the important role that the final years of her life have had on her spiritual legacy:

When Mother first had her stroke [in 2001], a lot of people said what a shame because she was a voice of the Catholic faith and for the truth...But faith tells us that all these 14 years were not wasted at all. Probably her most profound work has gone on in this time, in her silence and suffering. I believe that to be true. Our Lord gave her this time to be truly cloistered in her bed and have that time of deep prayer and intercession and suffering as an offering for the Church and for the world, for our order, for the network, for many things. And ultimately for souls. We won't know until eternity the value of these past years.²

I invite each of you to consider how this time that you have here, surrounded by the wonderful gift of our Catholic faith, is a time during which you still have much to offer in being true witnesses to the Resurrection. Your prayers and sacrifices can have a profound impact on your fellow residents, your families, your parishes, our diocese, our county and the Universal Church. Our faith in the transforming power of Christ's Death and Resurrection assures us that these offerings can and will bear great fruit for the good of souls.

As we prepare to receive the foretaste of the heavenly banquet of Heaven in the Eucharist, let us ask the Lord for the grace to continue to be witnesses to our faith in the Resurrection. We are confident that everything that the Lord allows us to experience until the day we are called home to Him can be offered to Him in the hope that He will use those offerings to draw us closer and closer to Him until we share in the Resurrection with Him in Heaven.

May God give us this grace. Amen.

¹ Pope Saint John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Salvifici Doloris*, n. 26, February 11, 1984.

² "Mother Angelica, 1923-2016," *National Catholic Register*, May 28, 2016.
www.ncregister.com.