

Homily Outline for Easter Sunday
Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception
April 12, 2020

† Most Reverend Thomas John Paprocki
Bishop of Springfield in Illinois

- I. The Lewis and Clark Expedition was a major chapter in the history of American exploration. Led by Capt. Meriwether Lewis and Lieut. William Clark from 1804 to 1806, its purpose was to explore the Louisiana Purchase and the Pacific Northwest.
 - A. It had been an extremely long and difficult journey, especially trudging over the seemingly never-ending Rocky Mountains.
 - B. The expedition team had expected a single line of mountains, not one treacherous range after another.
 - C. So it was that William Clark wrote only three words in his journal as he and the expedition members first saw the Pacific Ocean. Seeing at long last the majestic spectacle in front of them, he wrote: “O the joy.” Yes, “O the joy!”
 - D. When William Clark wrote, “O the joy” in his journal, he was expressing his own joy, of course. But he was also telling centuries of historians and everyday readers something thrilling. He told us that all the sacrifices made in the long and arduous Lewis and Clark expedition were worth the misery, pain, and perseverance.
 - E. Further, Clark’s words inspired future explorers—and all who would hear his story—to push themselves to the limit.

- II. Recently, with the coronavirus pandemic ravaging the globe and nearly all live events postponed or cancelled, the Rotterdam Philharmonic Orchestra performed a rendition of Ludwig van Beethoven’s “Ode to Joy,” with 19 musicians each playing their part from home.
 - A. Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony, with its “Ode to Joy” chorus, was originally written and composed in the early 1820s before it was first performed in 1824 in Austria. It represents a triumph of humanity over war and desperation and is based on a 1785 poem from the German poet, playwright and historian Friedrich Schiller.
 - B. We perhaps know that melody better from a couple of Christian songs that are sung to the “Ode to Joy” theme from the final movement of Beethoven’s famous Ninth Symphony.

1. The lyrics to “Sing With All the Sons of Glory” were written by Anglican Minister, William J. Irons, in 1873 and are based on St. Paul’s First Letter to the Corinthians (15:20).
2. Another hymn using that same melody, “Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee,” was written in 1907 by the American author Henry van Dyke.

C. The version by William Irons is specifically an ode to the joy of the resurrection:

*Sing with all the saints in glory, sing the resurrection song!
 Death and sorrow, earth's dark story, to the former days belong.
 All around the clouds are breaking, soon the storms of time shall cease;
 In God's likeness we, awaking, know the everlasting peace.*

III. Today’s Easter celebration shows us that great sacrifice can bring great joy.

- A. Far beyond the success that Lewis and Clark achieved and the joy that seeing the Pacific Ocean engendered for them, the Resurrection’s meaning for us is simply immeasurable and gives rise to unparalleled joy.
- B. The life, death and resurrection of Jesus is a success story of an entirely different magnitude. It is simply the greatest success story ever told.
- C. Jesus’s resurrection is a success story that gives us joy because Jesus gives us life: “Life to the full,” eternal life. Nothing else even comes close to bringing us greater joy.
- D. Yet, Jesus had to undergo great sacrifice and challenge before the joy of the resurrection.
- E. Jesus’ very life serves as a model for our lives: to give life to others, to bring Easter joy, “Easter life,” to others – all of this despite the personal sacrifice and challenge required, especially during this difficult time of the coronavirus pandemic.

IV. St. Paul teaches us about our new life in Christ.

- A. We hope to share in his resurrection, not only at the end of our earthly lives, but each day as a member of Christ’s body, the Church.

- B. This new life invites us to model our attitudes and actions on those of Christ: to love the weakest members of the community, to be generous to those who are poor, to forgive wrongs, to heal those who hurt, to continue to sing a song of joy and celebrate the day of resurrection.
- V. Of course, everything we have talked about thus far depends on our faith in the Resurrection.
- A. In today's Gospel, we note that John, the Beloved Disciple, "saw and believed."
 - B. John instantly came to faith regarding the Resurrection, despite little firsthand evidence and no direct description of the actual event.
 - C. We, on the other hand, have had the benefit of 2,000 years of tradition, theological study, and biblical scholarship to help us believe and be joyful about this earthshaking event.
 - D. Still, it is neither easy to believe in anyone rising from the dead – even ourselves – nor to live the helpful, joygiving life of a Christian.
 - E. But we have the Holy Spirit ever guiding us to truth, belief, and loving action.
 - F. So let us allow the words of our liturgy today to speak Easter joy to our minds, our hearts, and our actions.
- VI. May God give us this grace. Amen.