

**Homily Outline for the Easter Vigil
Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception
April 3, 2021**

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- I. Shortly after my homily we will have the Renewal of Baptismal Promises.
 - A. In contrast to the Profession of Faith that we recite at Mass every Sunday, the Renewal of Baptismal Promises is presented as a series of questions, to each of which you are asked to affirm your baptismal commitment by responding, “I do.”
 1. In the first three questions, you are asked to renounce Satan, and all his works, and all his empty show.
 - a. You might be surprised to know that this is called a “minor exorcism.”
 - b. The tendency may be to think of exorcism in terms of sensational scenes from a Hollywood movie.
 - c. But an exorcism is basically breaking one’s relationship with the devil.
 - d. A major exorcism is when a person is possessed by a demon or demons and needs the intervention of an authorized priest to expel the evil spirit(s).
 - e. A minor exorcism is anytime we renounce having anything to do with Satan and his minions.
 2. The next three questions of the Renewal of Baptismal Promises then ask us to affirm our relationship with the Holy Trinity—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit—as well as our relationship with the Holy Catholic Church and the communion of saints.
 3. We also affirm our belief in three essential tenets of our faith: the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting.
 - B. In short, we want nothing to do with the Evil One and we want everything we can do to have an unbreakable relationship with God.

1. Belief in the forgiveness of sins is harder for many people than you may think; even after confessing their sins and receiving absolution in the Sacrament of Penance, some people have a hard time believing that God has truly forgiven their sins.
 - a. Judas could not believe that God would ever forgive his betrayal of Christ, and so he hung himself.
 - b. Peter came to believe in our Lord's forgiveness and experienced the Lord's divine mercy and loving compassion.
 2. Disbelieving in the forgiveness of sins is a sin of despair, which is a sin against the First Commandment, which calls us to place our hope in God alone (cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 2091).
- II. We must also reflect on what it means to believe in the resurrection of the body and life everlasting.
- A. The resurrection of the body that we profess in the last question of the Renewal of Baptismal Promises is about our resurrection, not about the resurrection of Jesus, which was addressed in the previous question about our belief in Jesus Christ, who "suffered death and was buried, rose again from the dead, and is seated at the right hand of the Father."
 - B. To whom does this "resurrection of the dead" refer?
 1. Jesus taught that "all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and will come out, those who have done good deeds to the resurrection of life, but those who have done wicked deeds to the resurrection of condemnation" (John 5:28-29).
 2. Contrary to what the Church has taught through most of her history, in recent years some theologians and Christian denominations, such as the Unitarians and Universalists, have suggested that no one is in hell, but everyone will go to heaven. This is called universal salvation.
 3. Our Lord's reference to "the resurrection of condemnation" indicates rather clearly that not everyone will go to "the resurrection of life," but only "those who have done good deeds."
 4. Jesus also states elsewhere in the Bible, "But I tell you, if you do not repent, you will all perish" (Luke 13:3).

- a. Someone followed up on that statement by asking Jesus, "Lord, will only a few people be saved?"
 - b. He answered them, "Strive to enter through the narrow door, for many, I tell you, will attempt to enter but will not be strong enough" (Luke 13:23-24). "How narrow the gate and constricted the road that leads to life. And those who find it are few" (Matthew 7:14).
- C. We must also be aware of the consequences for evangelization if it is commonly accepted that everyone will go to heaven regardless of how sinful they have been and without ever repenting of their sins.
1. If I am going to heaven no matter how much evil I do in this life and I never repent of those sins, why bother going to church? Why follow the Ten Commandments? Why should I love my neighbor?
 2. Actually, the Catholic Church teaches that it is a sin against the First Commandment to believe that you will go to heaven no matter what you do in this life; that is called the sin of presumption, because the sinner presumes God's mercy without repenting and asking for forgiveness.
 3. According to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (n. 2092), "There are two kinds of presumption. Either man presumes upon his own capacities, (hoping to be able to save himself without help from on high), or he presumes upon God's almighty power or his mercy (hoping to obtain his forgiveness without conversion and glory without merit)."
- D. So we must avoid both extremes: despair on the one hand and presumption on the other.
- E. That is why we affirm that we believe both in the forgiveness of sins and the resurrection of the body.
- III. As Christians, we hear Our Lord's clear call to repentance and we pledge to put His teachings into practice in our lives with the help of His grace, that we too might share in the joy of His resurrection. "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life" (John 3:16).
- IV. May God give us this grace. Amen.