

Commentary on the Gospel for Sun, Mar 27th 2016

An Easter Blessing

“Christ indeed from death is risen, our new life obtaining.

Have mercy, victor King, ever reigning!" (Sequence)

Easter is a celebration of "new life"! All creation joins in the celebration. Each Spring we rejoice in the new life of nature bursting forth after the slumber of winter.

And we Christians echo nature in celebrating the "new life" of God's presence bursting forth among us through the resurrection of Jesus. Jesus is raised from the dead! But not only is Jesus raised from the dead, we are too! Paul could not be more direct in his Letter to the Colossians, "If then you were raised with Christ, seek what is above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. . . For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God."

At Easter we celebrate the historical event of Christ's resurrection two thousand years ago! But at Easter we also celebrate the "new life" we receive through faith and baptism. Indeed our celebration becomes significant to the degree that we personally recognize this "new life" within us, those fruits of the Spirit's presence in our own hearts: charity, joy, peace patience.

During this season I am drawn to appreciate anew the ancient tradition of the Orthodox Church. The Orthodox Church has always emphasized that the primary reason for God's incarnation in Jesus is the sharing God's divine life with believers. In the Fourth Century this truth was proclaimed most simply and eloquently by St. Athanasius of Alexandria: "God became human so humans could become divine." For Orthodox believers God's primary intention in the Incarnation is that God's Spirit be poured upon believers so they in turn become more and more like God. They call this deification.

Today's Sequence also echoes this theme of deification:

“Yes, Christ my hope is arisen;

To Galilee he goes before you.

Christ indeed from death is risen, our new life obtaining.

Have mercy, Victor King, ever reigning!

We Christians at Easter humbly ask God for the grace to open our hearts more fully to the Risen Jesus. In opening our hearts we become more and more God-like for we radiate the very presence of God though our charity, joy, peace, patience!

The Responsorial Psalm catches our joy: "This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be

glad.”

Happy Easter!

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