

April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2021 – Easter of 2021

Dear Families and Friends of All Saints:

*Nos autem gloriari oportet in cruce Domini nostril Iesu Christi, in quo est salus, vita et resurrectio nostra per quem salvati et liberati sumus. It means we should glory in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, for he is our salvation, our life and our resurrection; through Him we are saved and made free. (Galatians 6:14).*

Greetings and Easter peace and joy to you and your loved ones! Jesus Christ is risen! Alleluia!

To celebrate our new life in the Risen Christ, Father Roland Freeman, Father Vincent Bui, Deacon Chuck Parker, Jr., Deacon Joseph Vu and his wife Kaity Tran, Pastoral and Finance Councils, Betsy Schulte, Nancy Ristuccia, Lillian Rotello, Denise Smith, Gian Nguyen and all Liturgical and Social Ministers join me in wishing you a HAPPY, BLESSED and JOYOUS EASTER!

With grateful joy of Easter, I would like to share with you my reflections as follows:

In our seeking and searching, in our pain and suffering, in our loneliness and discontent, our wounded hearts and souls can soar closer to God than ever before when we hear the resurrection power of God in Christ calling us into new life. How can we live with joy, beginning with this Easter's experience, in the midst of all daily frustrations, sufferings, worries and anxiety?

We hear Jesus says: *"I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die" (Jn. 11: 25-26).* Do we believe this (with joy)? The joy of the Good News concentrates on that Christ redeemed us all and gave perfect glory to God principally through his paschal mystery: dying he destroyed our death and rising he restored our life. This new life begins here and now. We may tend to think of eternal life as something out there, in the future. Yes, the eternal life obviously has a future reference; however, it is referred to as a quality of life, rather than a dimension. In other word, the eternal life is to know God, to love God, to trust in God, to hope in the love and mercy of God, not just intellectually but with our whole being — and it is now. How can we live the new and eternal life now?

First of all, in the opening chapter of the Gospel of John, we read about how Andrew and John come and stay with Jesus (Jn. 1: 35-42). They are thrilled by this encounter that they immediately begin to announce to anyone who would listen that they had "found the Messiah." In this encounter, we see the fundamental rhythm of effective evangelization: they meet Jesus. They find the experience lifeenhancing and they want to tell everyone about it. The very best bearers of the Gospel are those whose joy in Christ is contagious. We know that radiating a sense of the joy that comes from friendship with Christ is the key to bringing others to the Lord.

St. Thomas Aquinas writes in the second part of Summa Theological how to deal with ethics, the question of how precisely we ought to live. It is most instructive to note that this massive treatment of Christian morality begins with joy. St. Thomas calls it beatitude. Ethics is all about what makes us happy. He determines that wealth, pleasure, power, and honor, though good, are not the source of true joy but only the infinite good of God satisfies the deepest longing of the human heart. He analyzes the habits and virtues that inculcate in us the moves that properly order us to our ultimate good.

Furthermore, St. Thomas Aquinas argues that laws are those prescriptions and prohibitions that place in us the habits that produce the virtues that in turn give rise to joy. He indicates that moral laws are not the heart of the matter, nor are they the starting point for ethical deliberation. They are utterly subordinate to and ordered around happiness.

On the other hand, for me, moral law follows and attends upon something far more basic, namely, the happiness that comes from intimate union with God. Once one has caught the zest of Christian life, one wants to know how to maintain that life. Ethics is important; but joy is more important. Because, when the joy is in place, the ethics won't be shunned; it will be embraced: first the joy, then the ethics. Getting this right makes all the difference.

Secondly, Saint Pope John Paul II taught that in making an ethical decision, a moral agent does not only give rise to a particular act, but we also contribute to the person we are becoming. For example, every time I perform a moral act, I am building up my character, and every time I perform an unethical act, I am compromising my character. A sufficient number of virtuous acts, in time, shapes me in such a way that I can predictably and reliably perform virtuously in the future. On the other hand, a sufficient number of vicious acts can misshape me in such a way that I am typically incapable of choosing rightly in the future. This is a kind of spiritual/moral physics, an articulation of a basic law.

Saint Pope John Paul II put his finger on a problem typical of our time, namely that people think that they can do lots of bad things while still remaining, deep down, "good persons," as though their characters are separable from the particular things that they do. In point of fact, a person who habitually engages in self-absorbed, self-destructive, and manipulative behavior is slowly but surely warping his/her character, turning oneself into a self-absorbed, self-destructive, and manipulative person. Viewed from a slightly different angle, this is the problem of separating "self" from the body, as though the "real person" hides under or behind the concrete moves of the body. Catholic philosophy and theology have battled this kind of dualism for centuries, insisting that the self is a composite of spirit and matter.

Let us, my brothers and sisters, restore the spirit of joy of our faith. I wish you all with this faith that we know that life is for living, to know that life is so very much more than that which begins with birth and ends with death. This is the faith that leads us from the Good Friday to Easter Sunday with the eternal joy,

Have A Blessed Easter Joy for ever more,



Rev. Msgr. Peter Quang Nguyen

Pastor