

Easter Sunday “Something Happened”

Bishop Frank Schuster

Something happened! My friends, something happened. Up to this point, we thought our lives follow the predictable pattern of the universe, we are born, we live, and we die. And then, something happened to the astonishment of the world. The tomb was empty.

My friends, have you considered that the Christian faith is unique from all other religions in that the veracity of what we believe relies solely on a historical event? Either the resurrection happened, or it didn't. There is no other choice. Let's begin with what we know. When Jesus was arrested, the Gospels agree with each other that the disciples fled. This is striking to me because if you want to start a new religion that is not the best propaganda to be putting out there. This had to be true and well known because all four gospels report this.

Something must have happened on this day to convince the disciples to return from hiding in fear to the public square, risking their necks, even giving their lives, to proclaim “Jesus Christ has risen from the dead”. What made this message compelling was, these disciples were not extremists. They were fishermen and businessmen. They had lives they could have gone back to. Their message wasn't very political either as they weren't looking to start a war or revolution. Quite the contrary, they came out of hiding declaring Jesus' resurrection along with his Gospel of love and his commandment to love others, even those who persecuted them. They risked their necks and gave their lives for that message, why? They did so because they in fact saw the risen Christ. Life will never be the same again.

The resurrection of Jesus was very inconvenient to the religious leaders of Jerusalem at that time because they were offended by Jesus' claim to be the Son of God. It wasn't long before the resurrection of Jesus became very inconvenient to the emperor of Rome because he claimed to be a deity himself and didn't like the competition. This is why if life insurance policies existed during this time, being a Christian would have voided your policy. For centuries Christians embraced persecution, torture and even death. Why?

It boils down to one reason: the resurrection of Jesus in fact happened. Up to this point, we thought our lives follow the predictable pattern of the universe, we are born, we live, and we die. And then, something happened to the astonishment of humanity. The tomb was empty. Jesus rose from the dead. Life has changed forever, alleluia!

Life has changed because life now has meaning. Life has changed because our hope in the future has an immediate effect on how we conduct our lives today in a way an unbeliever just can't understand. This is because we must look at this world now in context of the world to come. This has implications on how we live our lives. We can live no longer for ourselves, but in service to God and the people around us, especially those who are poor, suffering or marginalized. We are baptized in this faith and remember our baptism on Easter Sunday because we know that life is no longer just about being born, living, and dying. Life now includes the hope of eternal life with God. Why can we say that? We can say that because on Easter Sunday something happened. The resurrection happened and we should be on our knees.

My friends, it is so easy to live our lives spiritually asleep to the implications of this. Holy Week reminds us to wake up, arise from our sleep, and renew our baptismal promises. If we need to deepen our relationship with God in our prayer life, now is the time. If we need to repair a relationship in our family life, now is the time. If we need to reach out in love as a disciple of Jesus to someone in need, especially those living on the periphery, now is the time. If we need to discover a deeper meaning in our own spiritual journey and vocation, now is the time.

Christians, what is holding us back? What is keeping us back from being enthusiastic followers of Christ? The answer is sin. The answer is also indifference. The answer can also be at times understandable anxiety and even sorrow. My friends, Easter Sunday invites us to open our hearts to Jesus who alone has power over sin and death. We are invited to welcome the Holy Spirit into the areas of our life that have flat lined, in need of spiritual defibrillation. We are invited to reclaim the joy Easter Sunday offers us and proclaim it from the rooftops! We need to let our hope in the future have an immediate impact on who we are today. This hope begins with the Good News we celebrate today. Death is not the end because the resurrection in fact happened, and will happen for us, if we just follow Jesus who is the way, the truth, and the life.