

SSVP EASTER REFLECTION 2020

On Connecting Faith to Life as an Easter Church

“We Christians have not thoroughly assimilated ourselves to Jesus Christ. We divorce faith from life (we content ourselves with preaching the faith or celebrating it liturgically, but we do not put love and justice into practice). An Easter church ... ought to be a church of conversion, of a fundamental turning back to Christ – whose mirror we should be.” (*Oscar Romero*)

This soul-stirring quote from the martyr archbishop St. Oscar Romero is an invitation for us to truly be an Easter Church. As someone who walk the talk, we would do well to pay attention to the ways he points out we can be precisely that. Perhaps the present crisis situation we find ourselves in, not being physically able to gather for Easter celebrations, puts the emphasis on living out the spirit and meaning of Easter in our lives in other practical ways.

He first challenges us to “be assimilated to Jesus Christ,” to become Christ to others, to become the hands, feet, ears, and mouth of Jesus Christ. He then challenges us to connect faith with life, to balance action and contemplation in our lives, to pray for peace as we work for justice, to not just settle for fine liturgies, but to live out those liturgies through charitable acts. As Vincentians, I believe we cannot rest on our laurels, but also celebrate that expressing our faith in Jesus by responding to the needs of the poor is our *raison-d’être*.

Romero then calls us to be a church of conversion – of *metanoia*, a Greek word meaning putting on our highest mind, being the very best person we can possibly be. The Great Triduum of Holy Week offers us ways to realize Romero’s message and live out our faith more fully.

The three themes of Holy Thursday are the ministerial priesthood, the institution of the Eucharist, and the centrality of service to Christian life. The fact that the gospel for that night is the washing of the feet in John highlights that both the priesthood and the Eucharist are all about recognizing and serving Jesus in the guise of the poor and needy.

Good Friday is all about venerating Christ not just in the wood of a cross, but also being willing to live out Calvary in slow motion in our lives – to be ready to be radical disciples ready to accept suffering without bitterness or resentment, as Jesus did, making it redemptive and connected to the suffering of Jesus.

Easter, perhaps surprisingly, is all about experiencing new and eternal life through forgiveness and grieving. All the appearances of Jesus were experiences of forgiveness of the disciples who had betrayed, denied and abandoned him. And he taught Mary Magdalene “not to cling to him” – in other words, to mourn and grieve the loss of the way she knew Jesus, so she could receive his spirit to be with her in a new way – which happened at Pentecost. So, Easter is an invitation for us to also forgive from the heart, and to grieve, mourn and let go of any losses in our lives, so we can receive his Spirit to be with us in a new way.

May the Spirit of the Risen Lord be with all of us as we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus to new life, and strive to live out Romero’s message in our own lives.

*Archbishop Sylvain Lavoie OMI
National Spiritual Advisor*