

Easter: Feast of new life

FATHER PATRICK GOMES

ALLELUIAH! Today is Easter Sunday! Today the Christian community joyfully celebrates the glorious resurrection of Jesus Christ. In fact the Christian faith and dogma is grounded on the redemptive death and glorious resurrection of Jesus Christ through which the humanity is guaranteed eternal life in heaven. The grace-filled humanity rejoices for it is now freed from the bondage of sins and an eternal relationship (covenant) is being established. His resurrection is a historical event that speaks of the reality of the end of evil: a new dawn has began; mankind has passed from the sinful passage of

life to the blissful world of grace. **The risen Christ** : With his death and resurrection Jesus initiates a new world for mankind; with the risen Jesus the whole humanity is risen. Victory over sin and death is obtained for the crying mankind. St. Paul writes in his letter to the Romans, "Jesus ... was put to death for our sins and raised to life to justify us" (4:25). He died and was raised that we may have eternal life in heaven. With this good news every year the Christian community joyfully celebrates Christ's resurrection which is the ultimate conclusion of the celebration the Paschal mystery beginning from Palm Sunday (4 April) and going through Holy Thursday, Good Friday, Holy

Saturday. In fact, the 40-day season of lent that begins with Ash Wednesday (Feb. 25) is a spiritual preparation with fasting, penance, almsgiving, works of charity, prayers etc. for the celebration of this week of paschal mystery traditionally called Holy Week. Each year Easter celebration not only takes us back to the divine resurrection history but brings our life to the present. The risen Christ brings a new time filled with grace, and he lives in this new time. We for whom Jesus died and brought victory over sin and death through his resurrection can now enter into his victory and be healed of our sinful state. It is therefore a new Kairos where we enter being risen

with the risen Lord, being glorified with his glorified existence. Only a transformed person can see the risen Jesus ever present in the present historical time called chronos. The disciples and a woman named Maria of Magdala had to make the step gradually from historical Jesus to the risen Jesus. She made a very big mistake to see Jesus with mere historicity and thought the risen Jesus was a gardener; the disciples on the way to Emmaus could not recognise him until the breaking of bread by Jesus. Resurrection of Jesus is a history of God's intervention that made Jesus raised from the dead and be in a totally transformed state, a state glorified. This glorified Jesus is ever present in this historical time and we are urged to preach this risen Christ to others through our "risen" "new" "glorified" life.

Easter celebration : Liturgically it begins from the Easter vigil liturgy in the night of Saturday, Holy Saturday which is centralised with the message of liberation from the bondage of sins. This is very well expressed by the blessing of fire and lighting of the big paschal candle from which all light their candles; blessing of water and sprinkling of water over all expressing the bath with the water of the risen Lord; renewal of baptismal promises, i.e., renouncing Satan and his activities and keeping faith in God and Jesus Christ. The whole salvation story runs through the chanting the Easter preface. Easter vigil liturgy announces the resurrection of Jesus singing Alleluiah, meaning praise the Lord! He is Risen! It follows then the holy Mass with

joyful hymns. Each family tries its best to fast on Good Friday and make every endeavour to have peace and reconciliation among the members in order to have real joy on Easter Sunday and of course the days after. On Easter Sunday family members exchange Easter greetings and young ones receive Easter blessings. Special food is very common to find in every family. However, unlike Christmas, Easter festivity and its sentiments last short in the society.

Call of Easter: As it is a feast of new life the Easter directly calls every one to rise from the strange and dreadful state and situation of sins and see the risen Lord present in his/her life. How do we celebrate the feast of new beginning while we remain still in the old? The reality is very challenging. There are sinful attractions, sinful activities, sinful attitudes, sinful motivations, even sinful strategies in the name of doing good in the political, social, economic or even religious area of our life. Easter calls all to take the challenge to bring a new situation.

We must come to the reflection, a deep reflection on the Easter event and take its call as a challenge. We are happy today, we are joyful, for today is Easter. Let us also take the challenge to live into its demand: a new and transformed personal and social life implementing peace, social justice, love and service in our life, in our society and at large in our country. And this Easter call is not only for Easter Sunday but is ever constant and contemporary; and it is not only for the Christian community but it is universal. Let us sing in one voice Alleluiah!

Resurrection message

REV. MARTIN ADHIKARY

THE Resurrection of Christ is God's protest against the power of evil and death. It is heaven's 'NO' to all that negate and frustrate human life and its meaning. The Just and innocent Christ died an unjust and violent death as the divinely designed penalty for man's sin. But this theological concept has to be from within its anthropocentric counterpart. It is human sin that caused Christ to die his ignominious death, the detested death on a cross. Sin is expressed in all kinds of thoughts and works of injustice, greed, hatred and pride. All these go against true human life, both individually and corporately. This is because sin is best seen in its societal nature and context adversely affecting others. God gives supreme value to human life, and he also wants us to value it. Christ conquered death by entering into and invading the realm of death. Death is our last enemy of life. Christ paid the penalty for sin, and the sinner is acquitted through belief in the efficacy of Christ's vicarious and substitutionary death. Through man's disobedience to God sin and death has permeated the entire human nature and has been subjugated under universal reign of decay. The universality of the death shows how unique is the event of Christ's resurrection. But how is Jesus Christ alive in us today? To be sure no human person has seen the actual event of Christ's resurrection. The Roman soldiers and Jews guarding the tomb all were so terrified at the shaking of the earth at the

event that they were like dead men and as such could not see Jesus being actually physically raised. While the disciples shut themselves in houses for fear of the same fate as met by their master. According to New Testament writings the resurrected Christ appeared to his disciples and many other people at various times and places, about twelve times for 40 days between his resurrection and his Ascension, to as many as 500 people. Neither did Mary Magdalene and the other women, who went up to the tomb to pay their last respect to Christ's body and embalm it, saw the actual event of the resurrection. The resurrection caught the disciples completely by surprise. The disciples were waiting death. So when Christ appeared to them they were frightened and surprised as if they were met with a phantom.

So how did the disciples come to believe that Jesus had really been physically resurrected? The answer seems to be that primarily each of them had their individual personal experience in his real spiritual presence. According to the New Testament Christ bodily appeared to them. But that body was a transformed and unnatural body. This presence was a transforming experience for them. That changed their whole life and its course and their attitude and philosophy. They celebrated life, valued and loved it for themselves and also for others. They knew how violently their master was killed. With their altogether new experience they could internalise God's transforming power in the world of nature. Christ's resurrection was not a fabri-

cated story; it was a fact, and as such the disciples needed to see proofs for it. It is an historic event that supremely testifies to the love of God for life. He is Creator and the Sustainer and Redeemer. Admittedly there are many discrepancies in the narratives. But that do not necessarily point to any possible fabulousness. Rather they point to the truth of the event personally experienced by each of the writers. They wrote from their personal point of faith and spiritual experience. We live in a terror-stricken time and society. Sometimes it seems that we are plodding along the valley of darkness and death. But there is always hope for us for better life. We firmly believe that the uncaring few cannot have the last word. They never had. Evil and wickedness prosper because they are not punished. All depends on us, individually as well as corporately. We all need to promote and encourage each other and entertain each other in the festal protest against all that frustrate life. Let this supreme human value be real to each of us irrespective of any difference that may exist among us. Let all people of good will everywhere have the one single choice to make a difference. It is the challenge to love love, and hate hatred. Finally, let us remember that God will not do for man the work he can do for himself. Men are God's tools for fighting any form of evil and death. Surely, we can overcome!

The joy in death (sorrow)

MIRIAM ROY (Jui)

It was a misty night
When everything was clear
Jesus had ceased to fight
Because his death was near.

Jesus lay pale and still
On the cross of Calvary,
As the shadow of death touched him,
It took away his pulse and will
And made his vision dim.

But death advanced like a hungry brute
No mercies did he give
For he had chosen another place
For Jesus' soul to live.

His vision was dim, his heart beat slow,
For death had won him over
And the veils of death over him did pour
And covered his body forever.

Death! Oh Death! Full of hatred and spite
Spare not a living soul
And plunges us into disastrous plights
Even before we have completed Our role.

But Jesus Christ rose again
From death to give us the eternal life
Joy filled the skies, the heaven
To welcome Jesus once again.

