

Pope St John Paul II:

“We do not pretend that life is all beauty. We are aware of darkness and sin, of poverty and pain. But we know Jesus has conquered sin and passed through his own pain to the glory of the Resurrection. And we live in the light of his Paschal Mystery — the mystery of his Death and Resurrection. ‘We are an Easter People and Alleluia is our song!’ We are not looking for a shallow joy but rather a joy that comes from faith, that grows through unselfish love, that respects the ‘fundamental duty of love of neighbor, without which it would be unbecoming to speak of Joy.’”

Pope Benedict XVI

But somehow [it seems] the Resurrection is situated so far beyond our horizon, so far outside all our experience that, returning to ourselves, we find ourselves continuing the argument of the disciples: Of what exactly does this “rising” consist? What does it mean for us, for the whole world and the whole of history? A German theologian once said ironically that the miracle of a corpse returning to life – if it really happened, which he did not actually believe – would be ultimately irrelevant precisely because it would not concern us. In fact, if it were simply that somebody was once brought back to life, and no more than that, in what way should this concern us? But the point is that Christ’s Resurrection is something more, something different. If we may borrow the language of the theory of evolution, it is the greatest “mutation”, absolutely the most crucial leap into a totally new dimension that there has ever been in the long history of life and its development: a leap into a completely new order which does concern us, and concerns the whole of history.

... His death was an act of love. At the Last Supper he anticipated death and transformed it into self-giving. His existential communion with God was concretely an existential communion with God’s love, and this love is the real power against death, it is stronger than death. The Resurrection was like an explosion of light, an explosion of love which dissolved the hitherto indissoluble compenetration of “dying and becoming”. It ushered in a new dimension of being, a new dimension of life in which, in a transformed way, matter too was integrated and through which a new world emerges.

Bishop Sheen (to be beatified in St Louis in September)

Friends, celebrating Easter in a world that is more like a Good Friday and hearing the chance of peace amidst the explosions of war makes us wonder what lesson this blessed feast could have for these tragic days?

The answer is to be found in two distinct scenes in the life of Our Lord. The first scene took place in the Garden of Gethsemane. And there emerges this lesson: Evil has its hour, but God has his day. And that evil hour is inseparable from God’s day.

Without the war with evil in its hour, there will never be the day of peace. Unless there is a Good Friday in our lives, there will never be an Easter Sunday. Unless there is the crown of thorns, there will never be the halo of light. Unless there is the scourged body, there will never be the glorified body. And there is the answer to the question of Easter.

How can we celebrate Easter in a world that is like a Good Friday?

Our Blessed Lord never said, ‘Blessed are the peaceful.’ But he did say, ‘Blessed are the peacemakers.’ Peace must be made. It must be won in a battle. Good Friday was not the day of appeasement. Therefore, Easter was not a day of false peace. Easter teaches us that there can be no day of victory unless we pass through the hour of struggle against evil and in union with the Savior. There can be no compromise with evil if our victory in Christ’s resurrection is the goal. In the triumph of his resurrection our Divine Lord keeps the scars that he received in the hour of his defeat, and he keeps those scars for all eternity. And on the last day when he shall come in the clouds of heaven to judge the living and the dead, he will show them as pledges of his victory. He is a prince of peace, but only because he was once a captain of war and the Lord of hosts.

Soldiers wear medals for bravery. But he wears his glorious scars as radiant suns in hands and feet and side; scars that he received the day that he fought in the battle for peace.

Father Sheen highlighted in his unique style, “Think of how many are suffering in these lands, and I speak only of those who are in these lands [who] are suffering in the name of Christ. There must be hundreds of thousands of them in these lands. They are having their hour, their hour of darkness, of famine, and of hate. Above all the battlefields of the world, beyond the din of national slogans, the scheming of foxes, the debates of politics, the selfish classes of economic forces, there is one common bond uniting them all — they are all prostrate before the cross of Christ. ... And in this their hour of darkness, they have a pledge that if the Easter law holds true, and it does, to the extent that their sufferings are one with him, they will rise again.

Not because of any reshuffling of politicians, or any new theory of economics will they rise, for politics again will fail; economists again will blunder; foxes will be caught in their own traps; schemers will be caught in their own schemes. But because these hundreds of thousands of chosen souls have been signed with a Sign of the Cross and sealed with a seal of salvation because they have borne their cross in Christ in that hour, they will rise with Christ. This war to them is the sowing of a seed. Evil has its hour, but God will have his day.

St Augustine

And now indeed all the evil men sing with us, Halleluia; but, if they persevere in their wickedness, they may utter with their lips the song of our life hereafter; but the life itself, which will then be in the reality which now is typified, they cannot obtain, because they would not practice it before it came, and lay hold on what was to come.

These are words of great hope and encouragement. But for who? They are *only* for: the meek and humble of heart; for those who truly believe, who know that our Lord is truth and means what He says and will do what He promises. They are *only* for those who will take them seriously, who will sit and ponder them, absorb them to the point where the person’s whole being, their whole mindset, their whole outlook on life, their very purpose in life, everything they think, say, and do is affected by, indeed directed by, the truth they contain. They are *only* for those who seek and believe true wisdom; for those who are willing to truly love the Lord, i.e., those who will sacrifice everything, bear with everything, for His sake. They are only for those who will now stand where our Lord stood on Good Friday – before the mob while they shout crucify him, crucify him. Yes, for these, these words of finality are words of hope and encouragement.

For whom are they not words of encouragement? Who is excluded? They are not for the worldly. They are not for those who think they have everything figured out. They are not for the comfortable, the satiated. They are not for the presumptuous who say to themselves: of course I’m going to Heaven, I’m a good person. They are not for the prideful who reject the mercy of God and refuse repentance. They are not for those who live every day as if this life is all there is. They are not for those who are not raising their mind to God every day. They are not for those who are only seeking transient pleasures, entertainments, or enjoyments. As Augustine says, such ones may stand and sing Halleluia now but they cannot obtain that which our Lord won for those who would follow Him with their whole heart, mind, soul, and strength; sadly, they will receive only misery.

These are words of great hope and encouragement who hope and trust in the Lord and follow His way. Let us come back to a few of them. Pope St. JPII: We are not looking for a shallow joy but rather a joy that comes from faith. He speaks here of something that endures even in the hardest times, the times of greatest loss – not something superfluous, not something that is here today and gone tomorrow.

Pope Benedict: It (the Resurrection) ushered in a new dimension of being, a new dimension of life. This is the future for all those who choose it.

Bishop Sheen’s emphasis was: no Easter Sunday – no participation in this new dimension of life – without a Good Friday. When those Good Fridays come, do not waver, do not be afraid, do not grow bitter at the losses and injustices of this life. Instead, look ahead to what it is our Lord has promised us.

St Augustine: lip service is not enough or just casually showing up is not enough. Go all in.

God bless you, Fr Kuhn