

REMANING RESOLUTE IN OUR HOPE

Part 1: Trusting In Christ's Promises

Father Raymond Harris

Homily prepared for delivery.

Part of the series, "Victorious: Risen with Christ"

Holy Family Church

Randallstown, Maryland

Fourth Sunday of Easter

Holy Mass at 10:00 am – May 3, 2020

Acts of the Apostles 2:14a,36-41 + Psalm 23:1-6

1 Peter 2:20b-25 + John 10:1-10

RESOLUTE IN OUR FAITH

Our Easter season theme is, "Victorious: We are Risen with Christ." Through Holy Baptism, we share in the victory that Christ has won over sin and death (cf. *Rom* 6:3-11). It is significant at the moment of death because it is significant during every moment of our lives. This includes a moment that we have never seen before. However, we have seen the Lord, who continues to draw near to us.

Through our baptism into Christ, God continues to dwell within us. God enables us to use His gifts of faith, hope, and love (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* [hereafter, [*Catechism*] ##1266; 1812-1829). Cooperating with God to practice these virtues will make us stronger during any season of life.

RESOLUTE IN OUR HOPE

For the past two Sundays, I have considered the virtue of faith. Faith enables us to believe in God, accepting what He has revealed through the ministry of His Church since God is truth (*Catechism* #1814). For the next two Sundays, join me in considering the virtue of hope. Hope enables us to trust that God's promises will be fulfilled as we cooperate with His providence (*Catechism* #1817). In the Gospel reading, Jesus invites us to trust that He is the guardian of our souls (*Jn* 10:7-10 ; *1 Pt* 2:25) He is our sure guide for navigating the journey of life, enjoying its opportunities, and overcoming its obstacles.

FOLLOWING THE VOICE OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD

Jesus says, "... the shepherd of the sheep ... calls his own sheep by name and leads them out ... he walks ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they recognize his voice" (cf. *Jn* 10:2, 3c, 4bc). Sheep will instinctually respond to the voice of their shepherd. I am told that in raising sheep back then, different flocks would rest together in an area at night. At dawn they would rise and return to their own shepherd by responding to their shepherd's distinctive voice.

As we hear from our Eternal Shepherd, we want to follow through on our intention to learn the meaning of His teaching. The voice of the Lord continues to speak to us through His Church (cf. *Lk 10:16; Jn 20:21*) We accept the Word of God in Sacred Scripture and the living Apostolic Tradition (*Catechism #80-82*).

FORMED TO BE STRONG DISCIPLES AND MEMBERS OF HIS CHURCH

Jesus promises that our lives will be profitable by hearing His message and living according to it (cf. *Jn 10:9,10b*). Captivated by His love for us, we do not want to be distracted by a cacophony of strange voices seeking to lead us astray (cf. *Jn 10:5, 8*).

These “strange voices” may invite us to believe that: God does not love us; or that God cannot forgive our sins; or that Jesus did not rise from the dead; or that Church teaching on moral issues is outdated. However, these counterfeit teachings have the potential of stealing our dignity, slaughtering our desire to persevere in the faith, and utterly destroying our lives (cf. *Jn 10:10a*).

BE RESOLUTE AS CHRISTIANS AND AS CITIZENS

We have completed seven weeks of quarantine to lessen the spread of COVID-19 and prevent our health care system from becoming overwhelmed. As the pandemic is wearing on, some of us are worn out. Strange voices may lead some to consider that if the Sunday obligation to worship during Holy Mass is not obligatory now, then why should it be obligatory at all? I read that in the comments section on the Archdiocese of Baltimore Facebook page. The Church has always taught that the obligation does not apply when there is a situation like a pandemic!

There are some who think that it would be an exercise of great faith if we would gather in crowds to worship during Holy Mass now because God will protect us. I understand the great yearning to receive the Eucharist. I really do. However, it would be an exercise of great foolishness to put God to the test, which Jesus said must never be done (*Mt 4:7; Lk 4:12*).

Yesterday, we joined other Marylanders to salute our healthcare heroes. They are resolved to provide medical care and other necessary services, even at great risk to themselves and their families. We owe it to them to refrain from listening to demands to weaken our resolve.

RESOLVED DISCIPLES WILL BE VICTORIOUS

Returning to the Gospel reading, as sheep are led to nourishing pastures and streams, the Lord is providing for what we truly need. As sheep are protected by the shepherd from becoming food for other animals, the Lord is protecting us from dangers seen and unseen.

How do we remain resolute in practicing the virtue of hope? We follow the voice of the Lord. This forms us to become strong disciples and members of His Church. We are victorious because we will not allow anything to change our identity in God or to lose our inheritance from God.

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