

Easter Sunday of the Resurrection of the Lord
April 9, 2023
Year of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Ark of the New Covenant

“I hope, my dear Christians, that, as Christ is risen, you have, in this holy paschal time, gone to confession, and have risen from your sins. But, attend to what St. Jerome teaches—that many begin well, but few persevere.” (Saint Alphonsus Liguori, Sermon XXI, For Easter Sunday)

As the first rays of the sun light the dawn on Easter Sunday, we may be tempted to offer a certain song from the movie *“The Sound of Music”* to the disciplines we practiced during the penitential season of Lent. How does the song go: *“Ladies and gentlemen, the children of Captain von Trapp wish to say good night to you: So long, farewell, auf Wiedersehen, adieu. Adieu, adieu, To you and you and you.”* As tempting as this may be, let us take a moment to reflect upon one verse taken from Saint Matthew’s Gospel. In the verse, Jesus says to His disciples: *“But he who endures to the end will be saved.”* (Matthew 24:13). Therefore, I ask all of us this question: If the disciplines we practiced during Lent were beneficial toward our spiritual growth and development, why are we so ready to discard them?

In his letter to the Christian community in Ephesus, Saint Paul encouraged each member to place upon themselves the whole armor of God. *“Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we are not contending against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual host of wickedness in the heavenly places.”* (Ephesians 6:11-12).

My dear family, during Lent, many of us experienced the Sacrament of Reconciliation. We confessed our sins and asked God to assist us in avoiding those near occasions which had led us into ruining our relationship with Him, each other, and ourselves. As I mentioned on Palm Sunday, we might even have felt lighter or freer after confession because the chains which had bound us in sin were destroyed and sanctifying grace was restored in our souls. We may have even felt whole or tempted to shout out that we had been healed. As soothing as all of this may be, no Catholic, contrary to what other denominations may profess, no Catholic, after their Lenten confession, would dare say: *“I am saved!”* You may ask why this is? The answer is simple—we are still here. And, because we are still here, we always run the risk of falling back into the sins we have confessed.

Consider it from a sports analogy. If we were to compare our penitential Lenten journey to Easter morn to a sports team who had sacrificed, fought and succeeded in winning a championship, would we [A] relax, sit back and enjoy the fruits of victory or [B] go back to work the next day trying to better ourselves and win another championship the following year? I pose these options to you for there have been many examples of sports teams winning the championship one year and falling completely apart the next.

My family, as great as Easter is for you and I to celebrate with food, family and candy today, we must be willing to go back to work disciplining ourselves tomorrow. I stress this to you now, for our goal, our Easter, is not victory for today. Rather, it is victory, it is Easter with God and family, for eternity. Therefore, we must never stop living our Christian virtues, for our enemy will never stop tempting us to stop living them. May God bless you and your family this joyous Easter Day.