



“At A Distance” – Awaiting Our Resurrection

It feels to me that Easter Sunday is bearing down on us at warp speed and in slow motion at the same time. While I am spiritually longing for Easter and the celebration that usually that comes with it, practically... this year... I am dreading the prospect of losing our most sacred gathering to COVID-19. But is Easter really “lost” if we simply miss the date? Do we have to wait until 2021 like we do for the Olympics? I say ‘No!’ We don’t have to wait. We can celebrate Easter together when we can... and we will! Like many decisions made by the early Christian Church, the date for celebrating Easter was done in a political context; with compromise, consensus building and yes, perhaps a “back-room” deal or two. Let’s have a look at how Easter came to be celebrated when it is.

Fixing the date on which the Resurrection of Jesus was to be observed and celebrated triggered a major controversy in early Christianity. The dispute, known as the Pascal Controversies, was not definitively resolved until the 8th century. The Eastern Christian Churches observed the day of the Crucifixion on the same day that Jews celebrated the Passover offering, on the 14th day of the first full moon of spring. The Resurrection, then, was observed two days later regardless of the day of the week.

In the West, the Resurrection of Jesus was celebrated on the first day of the week, Sunday, when Jesus had risen from the dead. Consequently, Easter was always celebrated on the first Sunday after the 14th day of the first full moon of spring. The Council of Nicaea in 325 AD decreed that Easter should be observed on the first Sunday following the first full moon after the spring equinox (March 21). Easter, therefore, can fall on any Sunday between March 22 and April 25.

Eastern Orthodox churches use a slightly different calculation based on the Julian rather than the Gregorian Calendar (which is 13 days ahead of the former), with the result that the Orthodox Easter celebration usually occurs later than that celebrated by the Western Christian Churches. In modern times, several attempts were made to arrive at a fixed date for Easter, with the Sunday following the second Saturday in April specifically proposed. While this proposal and others had many supporters, none came to fruition. Renewed interest in a fixed date arose again recently, resulting from discussions involving the leaders of Eastern Orthodox, Syriac Orthodox, Coptic, Anglican, and Roman Catholic churches, but formal agreement on such a date still remains elusive.

So, if the early Church simply picked and agreed upon a day to celebrate Jesus’ Resurrection, I think we are perfectly free to pick another one this year. A true day of Resurrection when we

can gather together again, in Community, looking one another in the eye, touching one another and praying together in community... not separated by screens or social distancing. Celebrating the most amazing of miracles by our Beloved Jesus, with a miracle all our own.

Blessed Ones, this is our time in the Tomb. We have been sacrificed on the Cross of COVID-19 and have been taken down, wrapped and spiced, and reside in our own personal, isolated tombs, with a stone rolled over the opening. We are living the words of our Apostles Creed, "descending to the Dead," awaiting for what is to come next... our own personal and spiritual Resurrection on our joyful and amazing Easter Sunday.

And Blessed Ones, just imagine how wonderful, glorious and spectacular this Easter will be. It won't be on April 12th when the Church calendar says it should be. Or perhaps not April 12th, or 19th or 26th. But Blessed Ones, EASTER WILL BE!!! Easter cannot be stopped, and we cannot be stopped either. We are the Easter People, the People of the Resurrection. We will have our Easter when our time in the Tomb is over. When it is time for us to be Born Again. When the Stone will be rolled back, and we are free again.

Until our Resurrection is upon us, Blessed Ones, we have a choice. As we reside apart, we can focus on what we don't have, what we miss, or what is gone, Or we can focus on what we WILL have on that day of Our Resurrection, in May or June or July or whenever it occurs. Let's begin together to plan the most amazing Easter Celebration ever! With flowers, and songs and our Beloved Ones holding hands without fear. With prayers and sharing our Gifts of Bread and Wine... with creating our own special Sacred Space again that you are all so good at creating. This most beautiful of Easter Services. Imagine it, see it, create it, build it. It will be ours, a collective, a tapestry, the noisiest of Joyful Noises.

This will be the most amazing Easter ever! Because we will have experienced our own individual Stations of the Cross like never before. We will arise... each of us with Jesus Resurrected, shining like Jesus did, the stone and the tomb a distant memory, to begin the next beautiful chapter of our own, personal Jesus Way story.

Together, we await our Resurrection.

Blessings,
Father Joe