

Easter Sunday of the Lord's Resurrection – April 9, 2023 – Very Rev. Bryan W. Jerabek, J.C.L.  
Cathedral of Saint Paul, Birmingham, Alabama – 7:15 and 11:00am Sunday Masses – 715 words

One of the fears we must all face during our journey through life is the fear that evil might somehow prevail; that it might have, as it were, the “last word”. Very often, such fear is connected with our own sense of well-being and the thought of things that could happen to us. But it sometimes takes on a broader profile, especially in times like ours. With every notice of another school shooting, with increasingly widespread rejection of what previous generations knew to be good and holy, and so many other deeply troubling things whirling about us, perhaps we, too, have wondered: Is evil finally having the upper hand?

No doubt, there were many who indulged this same fear when the God-man was crucified on a Friday afternoon some one thousand nine hundred and ninety years ago. “Surely this man was innocent”, the centurion exclaimed. Claudia, the wife of Pontius Pilate, had warned him not to have anything to do with Jesus, knowing he was a righteous man. Then Pilate for his own part became convicted of Christ's innocence, finding no guilt in him. Judas Iscariot concluded that he had betrayed innocent blood – before going out and taking his own life in despair. Yes, Jesus was innocent; he was the one who would save us... but now he was dead.

It may well have seemed like evil triumphed definitively. But then, soon after, there was a surprising plot twist. As the Sequence had Mary Magdalene exclaim, “Christ my hope is arisen; to Galilee he goes before you.” From there, people would discover that Jesus was truly alive; they would enjoy his company for some weeks more; they would ultimately contemplate his ascension into heaven and recall his words: “I am with you always”, and, “I go to prepare a place for you.” Evil seemed to have dealt a definitive blow, but good won out. Evil had led so many to a place of despair, but now Christ brought hope – a hope that is eternal.

From that time on, Jesus has always gone before us: both to Galilee, so to speak – that is, to every place we might go in our earthly life; but also to heaven, where he indeed prepares a place for us. That is to say, he is our hope in every way that pertains to our good and our human fulfillment, to our happiness – whether it is a true but passing happiness in this life or our eternal happiness in heaven. Thus, as we witness the ebb and flow of history, with the rise and fall of good and evil, even when the evil seems to reach unforeseen breadth, it can never overcome the Lord. His crucifixion was the greatest evil ever perpetrated: and he defeated it.

Practically speaking, this means that we have our work cut out for us, for it remains no less disturbing to turn on the news or, in many cases, simply to be out and about in a world that has gone mad. But the Lord is going to bring us through it. And since he does go before us not just to eternity but even in our daily lives, he is going to give us what we need to navigate the winding and increasingly complicated path. He remains, as ever, “the way, the truth, and the life”. The great Italian poet Dante, in his *Divine Comedy*, famously had the welcome sign to hell read, “Abandon all hope, ye who enter here”. But we are following Jesus Christ!

Yes, with Christ there is always hope; we must pray for an increase of this divine gift in our souls, so that we can trust that his way is best, even when we have more options than ever and might feel at times that we have few companions on our journey. The devil is the father of lies and wants us to feel isolated, disenfranchised, and hopeless. He is the father of doubt, discouragement, and despair. What is very heavily on my heart to share with you this Easter is quite simple: Christ is alive! He is Lord! He loves us! He is on our side! He will get us through it all, if we but strive to follow him! He goes before us always. Never give up hope!