

EasterSunday041220

RESURRECTION! SOMETHING ELSE IS NEW!

On Friday March 27th I witnessed something extraordinary. I joined millions of people all around the world in an unforgettable hour of prayer with Pope Francis I. Saint Peter's Square was empty. It was the end of twilight with darkening skies and rain. I had heard that the Pope was going to bestow a Plenary Indulgence, forgiveness for all past sins. Forgiveness is my life, and my ministry. I tuned in not knowing what to expect.

Pope Francis read the Scripture passage of the apostles on the Sea of Galilee in their fishing boat. A storm suddenly sprang up. It was the dead of night. Jesus was in the boat with them. Asleep. They were very afraid. They woke him. He calmed the storm and asked about their faith. What had happened to their faith in Him? The Pope made the point that there were similarities with our present worldwide situation with the coronavirus. We are truly in the same boat, all of us. And Jesus is with us. In the boat with us. Good to remember. Necessary to remember.

The Pope was alone. A solitary figure under the canopy. Suddenly he was an old man. He was a very solitary figure giving a homily. It was broadcast by social media to people all over the world. To people of great faith, weak faith, no faith. He put his own faith on the line. Then he got up and walked from the canopy. He went to a large icon of the Blessed Virgin, Health of the Sick. He prayed for Mary to intercede with her Son for us and our world, as she so often asked his help during his lifetime. He touched the icon at the end of his prayer.

Then Francis went to the other pillar. He prayed before the crucifix from the Church of San Marcello which burned down during the 1500's. That crucifix was salvaged unharmed from the fire. This was during the plague. It was a sign of hope while the plague was killing thousands. Francis prayed and touched the corpus of the crucifix and then bowed to kiss the Body of Christ. To me, I suddenly realized, that is what was actually going on that night. This old pope was giving a kiss to the worldwide Body of Christ, to the entire human family. Hope was being reborn that night.

He went inside Saint Peter's and there was an altar with the Blessed Sacrament in a beautiful gold monstrance. The Pope sat heavily in his chair and looked at the Blessed Sacrament. And the Lord looked back at the Pope. Later there would be prayers of petition begging God's mercy and compassion and

forgiveness. Quiet prayers. There was music from the papal choir at various times. In Latin. Beautiful. Haunting. Without understanding the words I intuitively sensed their meaning. We were crying out in our hymns for the Lord to be with us as He was with the apostles in the little fishing boat.

Then the Holy Father was draped with a humeral veil. The monstrance was placed in his hands and he turned to walk back out into the darkened night, in the driving rain. Solemn. Grave. Serious. Poignant. Very real. And solitary. And then he lifted the monstrance and blessed everyone. Three times. In papal fashion. Profound. Moving. Almost breath-taking. Listen to how one man) described this moment.

“As the Holy Father lifted up the Blessed Sacrament in its monstrance, to impart his blessing to the city of Rome and to the world, one of the members of my household got down on her knees in the living room before the big TV. She bowed her head to receive the blessing. And then so did everyone else, following her lead. By the time the blessing was over, all of us were in tears. We were struck by the profundity of what we had just witnessed. Perhaps you too were deeply moved.”
(Mike Pakaluk of The Catholic Thing)

I certainly was. I will never forget that moment. Something new had just happened. New. I mean really new. New in all the history of the world. New. As the death of Jesus of Nazareth was new. New. As the resurrection of Christ from the grave was new. In that moment the entire face of the earth was being renewed and blessed with the presence of Jesus Christ. Millions of people saw it. Felt it. I could feel the truth of it in my body. There was a uniting with and a renewing of the face of the earth begun in that moment. And we were alive and many of us saw it happen before our eyes. A transformation was taking place. A transformation has taken place. Like Easter. Rooted in Easter.

My friends. Pay attention. There is something going on now. We will not simply be returning to what was. No. We are to face into the future and we are to put Christ first. The Risen One. The Conqueror of sin and death. The restorer of hope. The rest will follow. The day has come for us. The Day of the Lord. A new Easter moment. Our Easter moment. Easter blessings everyone!

May the Lord bless us today and give us his peace.