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Easter Sunday

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The Lord is Risen! He is Risen Indeed! Alleluia!

The big deal about Easter is the resurrection of our loving Savior Jesus Christ. Now let us pause on this. Before Jesus rose from the dead, no one had risen from the dead by himself. His disciples were stunned when they realized that Jesus was risen from the dead, and not as a ghost without a body or a zombie without a soul (Matthew 28, Mark 16, Luke 24, John 20-21, Acts 9)! Indeed, Jesus is risen because he is God and man: God raising himself in his human body which was seen to be capable of dying a most ignominious death. As the eternal Son who is God, the Son cannot not be. Blessed be God that Jesus signifies his eternal life and love for us in his rising from the dead and being seen risen by stunned and incredulous disciples to assure that he is risen indeed!

As Catholics, we rejoice that taking a body upon himself in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary so that he could die and rise in that same body, Jesus, the Son of God, means his resurrection from the dead to apply to the human nature. Jesus meant what he said: he came that we may have life abundantly (John 10:10).

Last week, I asked you to join our Holy Father Francis in marking the twenty-fifth anniversary of Pope St. John Paul II's encyclical, *Evangelium Vitae: The Gospel of Life*. I also introduced to you a commentary on that encyclical in the *National Catholic Register* (29 March – 11 April edition) by George Mason University law professor Helen M. Alvaré (<https://www.ncregister.com/daily-news/john-paul-ii-s-evangelium-vitae-gave-a-voice-to-those-promoting-respect-for->). I gave an outline of what Professor Alvaré saw as **two of four points**. **The first point was that the Gospel of Christ, the Gospel of life calls us to live in the truth**, including the truth of the wondrous dignity of the human person, and each human person's unrepeatability. **The second point was the importance of the human and personal family as the safeguard of the rights of others granted by God as creatures equally receiving the rights I received from him. The family is to be the foundation of a selfless society.**

**In the third point, my right to life and my right to live as I want is always to be coupled to the salvation of someone weaker than I.** Here then the Gospel of Life is about upholding life so that Christ can be known by the living. Let us think about that the next time we think our families would be better off with one less mouth to feed, one less elderly aunt or grandfather to sustain, one less Federal death row prisoner to give a chance of true repentance while yet on earth, one less of ourselves to be a burden on our families – or that we would rather someone were nice or not be at all than be one who risks challenging us with the truth.

**Fourthly, the Pope St. John Paul II's summary of God's action for us, yes, even for each of us, from the creation to the apocalypse is always about what God wants to do for us. God's action and will are never in reference to, or compromised by, how inconvenient our existence is to God's serene and eternal lifestyle. God's action and will for us never limits his freedom to maximize his glory as reflected in his creation**, because unless he allowed humans the freedom to do good so that he could just as freely show his mercy when we choose badly, creation would not need the encore which we Christians find worth celebrating at Easter, which ushers the New Creation (2 Corinthians 5:17, Galatians 6:15, and others). **God's pro-life will and action for us is that we share with him – in love, in awe, and for eternity – what he beholds in the unabridged fullness of his capacity to love the other creatures he created before us. God likes to share with those weaker than he, particularly the unique earthly creatures weak enough to sin, otherwise he would not command us to share with our fellow sinners also (Isaiah 58:7).**

**Now let's apply Professor Alvaré's outlook on the Gospel of Life to our COVID-19 distress.** The virus should remind us that whether we are young or old, unemployed or retired, rich or poor, female or male, interesting or boring, athletic or sedentary, dull or brilliant, scholarly or low-brow; the truth of our persons is our vulnerability. Each of us is as rare as a diamond because each of us is an unrepeatable instance of the human substance. At the same time COVID-19 is a leveling and unifying reminder that each of us is in just as much of a fragile state as an embryo, with an existence requiring us to depend on others. So let me commend so many of

you who have been dependable for others, perhaps not in ways to which we should return after the doors open up again all over the world; but in these days in which our shared vulnerability has been so highlighted. You saw how right now someone in your life has benefit from your buying necessities, writing a note, making a telephone call – even standing outside the window to smile and wave.

You are Catholics keeping on being Catholic. You keep on sharing as Christ: to love the individual and not seek love from the group; to say what people really need to hear and not to spread irritability, resentment, or sins against the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 4:29; Matthew 12:32; Mark 3:29; *Catechism* §1864, 2091-2); to bravely speak the truth that I am a sinner, the very sinner Jesus had in mind when he rose from the dead, and that it is because of Jesus loves me that I seek reconciliation with his Father and to love you.

Many people have told me that far from feeling the burden of isolation, they are relieved of isolation when they can contact in some way friends and relations who would feel isolated, were it not for them. Sadly, outside the public emergency people assert that unless we so radically isolate ourselves from each other that the other becomes nameless, faceless, tolerable only when the other's weaknesses are extinguished in the destruction of the other, and therefore disposable, we cannot maximize ourselves. Let them hear the Gospel of Life from you this Eastertide, that they rise with you from our isolated condition.

The Gospel of Easter – the Gospel of Christ, the Gospel of Life – is that God neither needed nor wanted to destroy us to show how much greater than sin and sinners he is. Rather, the Gospel is that God wanted to save us **FOR LIFE WITH HIM**, to show how much greater than sin and sinners he is. Were God not pro-life – that is, pro-**EVERY**-life – not only would he not have sent his Son to be my Savior, he might have repented of having created me, and might have destroyed me as not worthy even of hell. He might have done this because of my being that part of his masterpiece of creation which I frustrated. **God might have seen me as the frustration of his becoming the best God that he could have otherwise been were it not for human life: my human life. Thanks be to God that he never looked at me this way, while knowing before creation the kind of priest I am, the kind of sinner I am, except of course for his grace. The Gospel of Life is that he is just as serene, just as benevolent, and just as delighted in creating and saving you and everyone you think is frustrating your becoming the you that you can be. Look, you are still you even through the isolation, the virus, the general fear of dying which we can often experience most painfully in the presence of jerks. He loves jerks, too, not that that justifies my being one. Nevertheless, the Gospel of Life all comes down to this: Do you really think that you are someone who frustrates God?**

Sadly, many who are pro-death are actually in favor of a gospel of Self-Maximization, the most blessed sacrament of which is offered daily and ultimately on the altar of abortion. Under this gospel of horrors, no one who disagrees with the self-maximizers, or makes them uncomfortable by holding them responsible for their own actions, or underappreciates and underrecognizes them, or is not as nice and tolerant as they seem in their own eyes, or dares call them to be their brothers' keeper rather than their brothers' prize to be cared for and fed by their brothers, has the right to exist. **Only if we really are individuals who frustrate God – and are that good at frustrating him – do we have the cover to practice this gospel of Self-Maximization, to be pro-[the-choice-of]-abortion, and therefore, pro-death. But who can frustrate God that perfectly?**

Rather, join me in the crusade against this Self-Maximization. Let us be careful that we do not let people talk us down a path promising ease and benefit for us while leaving other lives to be abandoned or denied. Let us receive rather than take, and adore rather than flatter, our loving Savior, our *Pastor Bonum* as he deserves to be received and adored. Let us give ourselves, then each other, the Gospel of Life this Easter, the same Gospel which in its fullness provides eternal life too. We can even share the text with someone who has no electronic media connection ([http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_enc\\_25031995\\_evangelium-vitae.html](http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_25031995_evangelium-vitae.html)). Let us, with Mary stand not for the maximization of ourselves, and stand rather for the magnification of the Lord (Luke 1: 46-47), rejoicing in God our Savior, in Christ. Pope St. John Paul II, pray for us!

In our Risen Lord Jesus and His Joyful Mother,

Rev. Father Rolando Silva

Parish Priest