

We have just completed our Lenten observance and now enter into the most special celebration of the Resurrection of our Lord from the dead, Easter. I believe that most of us are well aware of the 40 days of Lent, the time of penance, of sacrifice, of prayer as we prepare ourselves for Easter. But, I think we pay less attention to the next season, Easter which lasts 50 days as we ponder the victory of Christ over death and the new life we have received from him. The Easter season starts today and continues until Pentecost when we mark the coming of the Holy Spirit.

Lent in its origins was meant to be a sort of a spiritual boot camp for those preparing for Baptism, a time of discipline to remove sin and temptation from their lives. But then the 50 days of Easter are known as the time of mystagogy, a time to reflect on the mysteries we have celebrated, to reflect on the gift of the sacraments received. In the ancient tradition of the RCIA, the new Catholics would celebrate the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and the Holy Eucharist at Easter and then they would have been told what they mean. Today we present the topic; we explain; do you have any questions, are you good to go. In the past it was the other way around. You learned the meaning of Baptism after you experienced it. Easter was a time of mystagogical catechesis on the sacraments.

This past week the eyes of the world turned towards Paris as we witnessed the destructive fire in the Notre Dame cathedral. A lot of ink, a lot of digital commentary flowed in reaction to the near-destruction of this religious and cultural icon. As a point of interest I searched for the words of the present archbishop of Paris, Michel Aupetit and found what I would describe as mystagogical catechesis from two homilies this past week.

First on Wednesday he celebrated the Mass of Chrism. Every year the bishop celebrates the Mass of Chrism where the holy oils that are used in the sacraments. The Mass takes its name from the Oil of Chrism, the consecrated oil, with a nice aroma, that is used in Confirmation in the ordination of priest and also in the consecration of churches and altars. He spoke about the fact that the walls of Notre Dame were anointed with sacred Chrism, the altar was consecrated with sacred Chrism as a sign that it was the house of God. And with the generosity of so many people Notre Dame will be reborn, re-consecrated. But as he continued the church is built of living stones. Notre Dame was anointed for God's service but so are we. We who have been Baptized, we who have been Confirmed have received the anointing of God, of the Holy Spirit and we need to also rise again, to live once again, with commitment, with joy, the incredible grace that we have received.

Secondly, from his homily for Holy Thursday, the Mass of the Lord's Supper, he spoke about the logic of God not being our logic. In every religion humanity bends the knee to God but on Holy Thursday as Jesus washed his disciple's feet, as he gave his Body and Blood to us in the Holy Eucharist, God bent the knee to us. God came to us. In the Eucharist God comes to us.

To believe all this, as we do, is to be crazy, to be mad in the eyes of the world. To be a Christian is to enter into this folly, this madness of God. We do not bend the knee to power but to weakness; to the One who died on the cross; to the One who comes to us as bread and wine.

So what does this have to do with Easter? Well first how is death conquered? Death exerts power over all, no matter how great. But when death meets with the supreme act of giving, the giving of the

death of the Son of God, death has met its match. When death meets the folly of God, it loses, the tomb is empty; Christ is Risen.

Secondly we need to reflect on what we have received. We need to experience that Easter mystagogy. Through our Baptism we have been conformed to this death of Jesus so as to rise with him. Through our Confirmation we have received the Spirit who will inspire us to live as Jesus lived. Through Holy Communion we are nourished with food that empowers us to give as Jesus gave to us. Through the graces of the sacraments we attain the grace of Easter. Through the sacraments we meet the logic of God, which to us is madness and in that encounter we too are given the assurance that we will rise again.