

In Jesus' name. Amen.

Christ is risen! **He is risen, indeed! Alleluia!**

Jubilate! Shout for joy! That is the Latin name of this Sunday, taken from the first words of the Introit. That's an interesting tone to set on a Sunday with a theme like "Cross and Comfort," don't you think? But that is how our mother, the Holy Christian Church, has started this Sunday for centuries.

It's a learned response, a response that the Church teaches us to have even in the face of our sorrows. It's nothing new, either.

We hear this same response in Lamentations, the OT reading for this week.

As Jeremiah is **remember**[ing his] **affliction and ... wanderings, the wormwood and the gall! ...** He also **"call[ed] to mind... [that] The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases... and therefore [he had] hope.** And broke out in a shout of joy: **"great is Your faithfulness."**

Let us consider our Lord's encouragement to His disciples on the eve of His crucifixion that they have hope for joy even during their time of sorrow.

We read as follows in Jesus' name:

...Truly, truly, I say to you, you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice. You will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn into joy. When a woman is giving birth, she has sorrow because her hour has come, but when she has delivered the baby, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a human being has been born into the world. So also you have sorrow now, but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you. ..."
(ESV)

This is Your Word, heavenly Father; sanctify us in the truth, Your Word is Truth. Amen. (John 17:17)

On this Mother's Day, let us contemplate our first mother and the Lord's promise to her.

It was after the devil had deceived the woman, who in turn gave to Adam the forbidden fruit.

When the Lord confronted Adam regarding his sin, Adam blamed his wife, who blamed the serpent. Straight away, the Lord then cursed the devil who possessed the serpent, saying,

"I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her Offspring; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel."

It would be through the woman's offspring that the Savior would come.

A human child, born of woman (of a virgin, as the Lord later revealed) would save them from their sin. That must have been such a relief to Adam and his wife.

That was the first Gospel message, the first good news, of a Savior to crush the devil's power.

But there was more to be said... The Lord then spoke to the woman,

"I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children."

What a bitter-sweet promise: the Savior would come by birth, but the pain of birth would be multiplied.

And the Lord doesn't lie, does He?

It wasn't only Eve's pain that was multiplied in childbearing and bringing forth, was it?

...

It is this point that Jesus took up in the conversation with His disciples that evening.

When a woman is giving birth, she has sorrow because her hour has come...

For 9 months, a mother anticipates that hour, sometimes with excitement, sometimes with dread.

Those 9 months of childbearing can be fraught with morning sickness, back-aches,
and a whole host of very nature-ly issues.

But ultimately, what has been growing and growing must come out and, usually, it isn't painless.

And the anguish of soul can also be terrifying. For mothers (and fathers) birth has its dangers.

There are no guarantees. The outcome is not known to us.

This makes child-birth a great picture for what Jesus was teaching His disciples.

In this life, there are sorrows and pains. We have times of weeping and lamenting.

For His disciples, that sorrow and anguish of heart would come very sharply and steadily
in the next few hours and for the next few days.

Jesus told them, He warned them, **"A little while, and you will see Me no longer."**

He was preparing them for His death and burial the next day.

Sometimes our sorrows and pains are a result of our own sins. ... Peter knew this sorrow.

He had fled from Jesus' and called down curses upon himself as he lied about knowing Jesus.

Peter knew sorrow from his own guilt, as Jesus, beaten and spit upon, turned to look at him.

You know this sorrow and guilt over your own sins, too, don't you?

The betrayal of those you love most, disrupting your family...

with unkind words you blow up at your parents... belittl your spouse...

crush the spirit of your children... sarcastically mock your friend... Yes, you know this sorrow.

Sometimes our anguish is caused by the sins of others, as Jesus experienced when Peter disowned Him.

When the children you have raised wander from the faith...

When others unjustly smear your reputation... Steal your property...

Entice your spouse... Scorn & mock you, even rejoice in your suffering...

And how often have we suffered the sorrows of this corrupted world.

The burdens of the heart from wars and riots... The heartless betrayal of love in abortion ...

The destruction and devastation of earthquakes, hurricanes, tsunamis, fires, plagues, and pestilence...

This corrupted world is our hour of sorrow.

Our pains and anguish, like labor pains, are to be anticipated, even expected... and prepared for.

They are not the exception in our existence here, but should be considered the rule.

That we aren't suffering non-stop is a gift of God's incredible grace.

But realize too, that the fact that we do suffer is also a gift of God's incredible grace...

That's worth repeating... the fact that we do suffer is also a gift of God's incredible grace...

Not because God is sadistic, that He enjoys watching His children suffer, but for the fruit it bears.

On this Lord's Day, let us also contemplate the Lord's promises to you.

Our suffering is a constant reminder to us that we are but **sojourners and exiles** in this world.

Through it, the Lord calls you to Himself, brings you to **call upon [Him] in [your] day of trouble**, thus humbling you AND, more importantly, driving you to trust Him for His unceasing steadfast love.

Consider Jesus Himself, during His passion, what do we hear Him doing?

He prays to His Father in the garden of Gethsemane, **“Not My will, but Thy will be done.”**

He prays the Psalms on the cross, **“My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me,”**^{Psalm 22:1} and

“Into Your hands I commit My spirit,”^{Psalm 31:5} as He bears the sins of the world and dies.

Consider also what a blessing His hour of sorrow was for His disciples ...and is for you.

Because without Jesus' sorrow, pain, and anguish, you would still be in your sin, bearing your guilt... still drowning under the pain and bitterness of sins committed against you by others...

You would still be under the power of the devil... still have eternal death looming over you without hope of anything better than this corrupted life.

But you have been delivered from all these things!

His sorrow is what brings joy (just as the birth pains borne by a mother are the sorrows bringing joy)...

Because Jesus Christ perfectly fulfilled His Father's will, it is completed for you...

Because He was forsaken, you will never be... He has declared all your sins forgiven.

Because Jesus committed His spirit into His Father's hands,

God is committed to keeping you in His hands, too.

Birth has its dangers. There are no guarantees. The outcome is not known to us, until it happens.

But note that Jesus continued His analogy of a mother and child who have been delivered, that is, they have been “set free,” saved from childbirth.

There is joy, through and after the sorrow.

And while the pain and anguish of childbirth are, relatively speaking, short-lived, the joy is not.

This new life gives joy, even through the sleepless nights of changing diapers, nursing, & what-not.

This new life of joy in the midst of suffering was what Jesus prepared His disciples for as He said,

I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you.

His resurrection, only **a little while** after His death (3 days, to be exact), would be their everlasting joy.

... a joy for which their shouts of joy could not be silenced on earth... except by death.

You see, it's not that nobody would try to take away their joy, it's that nobody would succeed.

It is a joy that cherishes Christ's forgiveness... that seeks to set others free from their sins...

that looks past the temporary pains and anguishes here in this temporal life...

and that clings to the certain hope given in Jesus' resurrection and the **joy that has no end.**

..

Notice that Jesus didn't take away the sorrow and anguish from Eve, nor of mothers in general.

He didn't take away the anguish of His disciples for those days, nor of the converted thief on the cross.

But He strengthened them to bear through the sorrow with the hope for the sorrow-less life to come...

which is what He does here with you, each and every week, and daily through your devotions.

So hear Him speak once again to you, His disciples, preparing you for the days, months & life ahead:

“your sorrow will turn into joy. ... you have sorrow now, but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you.”

Christ is Risen! **He is Risen, indeed! Alleluia!**

Soli Deo Gloria