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# EASTER

## DAY MASS

Homily of the Right Reverend Dom Jean PATEAU  
Abbot of Our Lady of Fontgombault  
(Fontgombault, April 20<sup>th</sup>, 2025)

*Mors et vita duello conflixere mirando.*

Death and life have contended in a stupendous duel.  
(Sequence of the Mass)

Dear Brothers and Sisters,  
My dearly beloved Sons,

**A**MONG THE TREASURES the Middle Ages have bestowed on us, there are many sequences, which enriched the liturgy. The Church has kept some of them, still sung before the reading of the gospel on the greatest solemnities. These texts, often simple and poetical, are an echo of the scenes and mystery plays that were played before the cathedrals, and announced or evoked the mystery of the feast. These living epics were basically nothing but catecheses, inviting the faithful to take a step from the visible into the invisible, to cross the threshold of the cathedral to commune with the true mystery.

For a few hours now, we have known that a page has been turned. This world, replete with bread and circuses, had lost its mainspring; it now discovers its true meaning. The path towards God has been opened by the resurrection of the Crucified One.

Assuredly, the mystery isn't totally unveiled. The evangelist Matthew recorded the events that happened the day after

the Sabbath, when the first day in the week was beginning to rise. There was first a great earthquake, shaking Jerusalem, as Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were coming near the tomb. An angel coming from heaven had rolled back the stone that was precluding any entry into it. He was sitting upon the stone. His position is already a token of victory. The tombstone, both a sign and a seal of death, had yielded. The angel, as resplendent as lightning, with a raiment white as snow, is like a hymn to the triumph of life. As to the guards, agents in Christ's death and His burial, they are petrified. They have become like stone, as dead men, writes St. Matthew. What seemed to be alive has become dead, whereas what seemed to be dead has recovered life.

But what is going to happen to the poor women, who have come to pay a last homage to the Crucified One, amidst such a commotion?

The angel addresses and reassures them, for they are on the side of life:

Be not affrighted. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, Who was crucified. He is risen: He is not here. Behold the place where they laid Him. But go, tell His disciples and Peter that He goeth before you into Galilee. There you shall see Him, as He told you.<sup>a</sup>

*a. Mk 16:6-7.*

For us, the mystery subsists. We haven't yet encountered the Risen Christ's face. Yet, as we believe it, He is risen, truly risen. As the disciples, let us take the road towards Galilee, a road that those who have truly sought, or are truly seeking Christ have trodden, or have to tread, and that men of all epochs are now called to take.

Such was the invitation of the Sequence: "To the Paschal Victim, O Christians, immolate a sacrifice of praise." Choosing the way of Galilee doesn't mean venturing into a labyrinth, a paper chase, or even worse, a deadlock made of return trips, of endless shilly-shallying. Christ is our Paschal Victim, have we sung. He gave Himself totally to us. Baptised in Christ, we are totally His, once and for all marked by the Risen One's seal. Yet, this sole seal is not enough. A vase may be marked by this seal, and yet be empty. Our baptism,

our own passover from death—the heirloom of Adam’s sin, marking our conception—to the life of grace, could be fruitless if, unlike the holy women, unlike the apostles, we didn’t keep seeking the Lord, through a life of prayer, through a sacrifice of praise, called to bear fruit in a life that is consistent with Christ’s and His Church’s teaching.

“The Lamb has redeemed the sheep; Christ, the Innocent One, has reconciled sinners with His Father.” What has been done without us will not, let us be convinced of it, bear fruit without us. “He that is not with Me, is against Me: and he that gathereth not with Me, scattereth.”<sup>b</sup>

*b. Mt 12:30.*

In a vivid way, this morning’s Sequence evokes the outcome of this great combat in which we are called to take part:

Death and life have contended in a stupendous duel:  
The Prince of life, Who died, reigns immortal.<sup>c</sup>

*c. Sequence.*

Even though Christ’s victory be final and irrevocable, we are called to appropriate as our own this victory and to reap its fruits.

God has created man and woman in His image. An image refers to the original. Thus is man ordered to God, not only inasmuch as God is his Creator, but also inasmuch as God calls him to a life of communion with Him, through the desire to know Him and through love. The stupendous duel between life and death keeps being enacted in the heart of each man. God has created him in His image, but the tempter has sworn to reform him, to disfigure him into his own image. He has sworn to make of him a rebel against God and His commandments, especially against the greatest of them, love of God and love of one’s neighbour.

Isn’t it paradoxical that in a country which professes to respect human rights, and doesn’t fail to give lessons under that respect, the elementary right to life of the unborn conceived child, sheltered in the maternal womb, is no longer recognised? What is more, how can we understand the fact that it becomes impossible to teach that abortion is not a human right, but a crime, and that societies which profess this “right” not only cannot pride themselves on a liberation, but step into the tragic road leading towards regression, and

scorn for the weak. Isn't it the same scorn that can be found at the other extremity of life, when what is offered to sick persons, to elderly people, who apparently seem useless, is a happy death by euthanasia? It is true, such persons can be a financial burden for society, but they can also give to those who hold their hands when they come and visit them a unique opportunity to love for free.

All things considered, in this stupendous duel, two glances are cast on man, two opposite glances. On the one hand, the deep scorn of Lucifer and his minions for a creature who has taken his place in God's heart, a creature in whom matter and spirit are mingled, and who is nonetheless called to the vision of God. On the other hand, the glance cast by Christ on each man from the top of the Cross, a glance of compassion on disfigured creatures, a glance that raises those who had fallen, and invites them to live his Passover.

As we ponder this stupendous duel on this Easter morning, we can see Satan, crushed, dragging his hatred for God, his scorn for a creature he wants to drag into his own rebellion. But above all, we can see Christ, the victorious King, risen from the tomb, our hope; Christ Who has offered His life, and Who shares His peace, inviting us to follow Him unto the Father; Christ Who entrusts us to His holy and sweet Mother, who in former days bore Him, and will from now on bear us. *Regina caeli, letare... Ora pro nobis Deum.* "Queen of heaven, rejoice... Intercede with God on our behalf."

Holy Easter. Amen, Alleluia.

