

I talk to many good people who've experienced many bad things in the world. The news is filled with natural disasters, heinous crimes, the coronavirus, tragic deaths, and *personal* losses. In frustration, we can lose *hope*. We may even say, the world is a "God-forsaken" place.

And that life's evils and failings can be explained by the all-too-common phrase: "*We're only human.*" *God forsaken? Only human? Nothing* could be farther from the truth of *Easter*.

In our darkness and alienation – in our suffering and struggles and frustrations -- And in the current isolation and unknown future of the Coronavirus -- A nasty, evil, *lie* takes hold of us:

That *God* not only abandons *us*, but the whole *world* too. Imagine the terror and confusion and disbelief of the remaining apostles. Jesus was dead and buried in the tomb. The women who reported the empty tomb were met with terrible disbelief. The Gospel says, "their story seemed like nonsense." The original Greek translates more vividly: "Their story sounded like the babblings of a fevered, insane mind!" Well, there's good news: "We're *not* crazy!" Jesus *lives!*

Jesus was *not* just some amazing miracle worker, teacher, philosopher, hero, rebel, who belongs to the great ash heap of history. He is *not* some dead figure of the past. He *lives*. *Right Here and Now*. He *chooses* to live in human flesh. The flesh born of Mary; the flesh clothing every human heart longing to be in these empty pews. So *no*, we are *not* to describe anyone as being "*only human.*" *Nor* as Godforsaken. For some *strange* reason, we are God's *beloved* children.

I want to share with you a piece of an ancient homily that the Church prays with every Holy Saturday morning for several hundred years. It says: "Something *strange* is happening -- There is a great silence on earth today, a great silence and stillness. The *whole* earth keeps silence because the King is asleep. The earth trembled and is *still*, Because God has fallen asleep in the flesh, And He has raised *up all* who have slept ever since the world began. God has died in the flesh and *hell* trembles with fear. He has gone to search for our first parent, as for a lost sheep. Greatly desiring to visit those who live in darkness and in the shadow of death, He has gone to free from sorrow, the captives Adam and Eve, He who is both God and the Son of Eve. The Lord approached them bearing the *Cross*, The *weapon* that had won Him *victory*. At the sight of Him, Adam, the first man he created, struck his breast in terror and cried out to everyone: "My Lord be with you all." Christ answered him: "And with your spirit." He took him by the hand and raised him up, saying: Awake O sleeper, and *rise* from the dead, And Christ will give you light."

My friends, not only on earth, but even in the depths of darkness, Christ seeks us out to save us. All the stories we read in this Mass tell us one key thing: God *never* gives up on His precious Humanity. And He goes to the darkest places in our hearts, to the darkest places in the realm of death itself, to raise us up in His precious light... Jesus is no longer in the tomb. He lives! It is the person who thinks our world is God-forsaken – Or that we are *only* human – *These* are the people who find themselves stuck in the tomb. We've all been there – Or, at least I'll speak for *myself* – *I've* been there. And I find myself there every time I fall into sin – Every time I lose faith, hope, or love for God and His beloved humanity. I started this Holy Week saying this may be the *Holiest* Holy week of our lives! Because we are *closer* to Christ in our darkness, In *His* suffering and death. We're *unable* this year to gather in the dark church, each one of us dispelling the darkness by a little lighted candle. But we *still* have the light of Christ in

this Paschal Candle. And all it takes is just *one* light to begin to overcome the darkness. In that blessed light, Jesus is crying *out* for us: “Wake up! – Arise!” *Come out* of the darkness and the tombs and the hell of sin and alienation from God. *Embrace* the *living* presence of Jesus in His life-giving *Word*, His Blessed *Sacraments*, His Holy *Church*; His humble *people*. Struggle and suffer though we may – We *remain* in faith, hope, and love. We push *away* the giant stones making tombs of our hearts. And we *open* ourselves to Jesus’ light to scatter the darkness of our stony hearts.

Jesus went down into the depths of hell and death itself to raise us up into His eternal life. Let us say *YES* to this life. And let us *be* the image of God we’re called to be, Let us *not* curse the darkness, but *scatter* it! Just one solitary candle at a time -- one solitary *life* at a time -- Lives gathered by this Christ.

*Pray for that light to come, especially* in the darkened corners of our lives. And *share* the light in prayers and acts of kindness, And a burning desire to gather around the Eucharistic table again. Brining *ourselves* as the candles -- fed from the *true light* our beloved Jesus! And we *shared* that light with the person *next* to us, still straining to break out of the darkness.

As the Easter Proclamation says: O Happy Fault – How *happy* I am to have inherited the sin of Adam, If *only* to be brought back to life in the glow of Christ’s redeeming light. So, no, we’re *not* God-forsaken; we’re not only human; *nor* are we crazy. We’ve *received* the light; the light of *Jesus* Who beats down the doors of *Hell* to gather us into His arms. Praise be our Risen Christ! The light that is stronger the deepest darkness. A darkness that *Christ’s* light shall *always* overcome.