

**Easter Sermon by Archbishop Stanley Ntagali at All Saints Cathedral,
Kampala, 1st April 2018**

Theme: The resurrection of Jesus

Text: John 20:1-9

Hallelujah!- Christ is risen indeed!

Happy Easter!

It is Easter Day again when we join other Christians all over the world to rejoice and celebrate the great event of our Christian history and identity which marked the VICTORY of Jesus called Christ the Messiah over death.

Because Jesus Died on Friday at the ninth hour, when the whole world was filled with darkness, which seemed to be a sad moment of defeat and despair, it was a bad Friday then. The Good News is that Jesus had accomplished His mission of redemption of humanity. He had bridged the gap between God and us. He said **“IT IS FINISHED”** (John 19:30)

Sin had separated us from our creator. The guilt of it and its consequences engulfed us. It demanded God’s intervention and His only begotten Son had to die in order to save us and reconcile us to Himself (John 3:16)

As Prophet Isaiah talks about the suffering servant, who is Jesus the Son of God that “By His wounds, we were healed”(Isaiah 53:5).

Jesus offered himself as a perfect sacrifice once and for all. Therefore by his suffering, wounds, death and resurrection, we are forgiven. We are reconciled, liberated and restored to our former status and identified as Children of God.

We can freely enjoy the benefits of Christ’s death and resurrection. It was made possible by God’s sufficient Grace. St. Paul stresses his understanding of God’s Grace the unmerited compassion/favor by stating that;

“But God being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ” (Ephesians 2:4). We got access to the throne of God’s saving grace.

Easter therefore gave meaning by fulfilling His Crucifixion on Good Friday. St. Paul, the evangelist stresses that resurrection is Central to Christianity and Christian theology -the theology of salvation of all humankind. He states in 1Cor 15: 17 that if Jesus had not resurrected from the dead, the Christianity would remain baseless. “If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins” That is to say there would be nothing to celebrate. In his letter to the Colossians 1:18 again Paul says that Jesus “is the beginning, the first born from the dead that in everything He might be pre-eminent. For in Him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell.

In Vs 21. He says that; “And you who were alienated and hostile in mind doing evil deeds, He has now reconciled in His body and fresh by His death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before Him”

John the evangelist records the story of resurrection in John 20:1-9 which was our gospel reading this morning.

“Early on the first day of the week while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciples the one whom Jesus loved (James and John) and said “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb and we don’t know where they have put him”

Mary Magdalene went to the tomb in the dark hours of the morning rather helpless and hopeless. She was the same woman who had supported the needs of Jesus and his disciples. She had followed Jesus faithfully and was present when Jesus died. She was blessed to be the first one to see the risen Lord. The stone was rolled away, the tomb was empty. Jesus had resurrected but Mary did not know where the body of Jesus was.

The tomb which had been heavily guarded by the Roman soldiers was empty. The guards fainted like dead men. Strange things had happened. Violent earthquake had come from heaven and the Angel's role was to remove the stone from the tomb. In verse 2. Mary went back quickly to tell the disciples – Peter and the others the Good News.

Christians throughout the centuries have had a big story to tell about Jesus Christ the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords, the fountain of life, peace and hope.

When we come to Him in faith, all our stones of life are rolled away. Sin is forgiven, Hope is restored and new life begins. Broken relationships are restored, darkness, hatred, greed and unfaithfulness are driven away from the believer's life. Jesus Christ in His power of resurrection becomes the light of the world. One finds solace and great encouragement because burdens of life are lifted. Today in our world and country, we encounter many challenges which are like the big stone at the tomb of Jesus which was rolled away by the angel.

Meeting the risen Lord this Easter can be a great joy and blessing. Meeting Him in a new way personally. Because He is risen and He lives forever. In Matthew 28:5, the Angel told the women as a consolation that “Do not be afraid for I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified, He is not here, He has risen just as He said, come and see the place where He laid, then go quickly and tell the disciples” Christ is risen! It is good news to the world. This is the power that sparked off Christianity and has sustained it over the years.

We are celebrating the great victory of Jesus Christ when many things trouble us, threaten and discourage us individually, as families, a country and as a continent. We live in a state of fear and anxiety. All that we hear around us is bad news. Killings and abductions are rampant. Poverty up country is on the increase. Unfaithfulness in marriage and domestic violence are breaking many marriages in our country. The youth are anxious and frustrated due to joblessness. They are at the crossroads. Many of them have lost hope.

It was because of these attacks on the institution of marriage, which is the basic foundation of a happy nation and Church that the Province declared last year 2017

the year for the family. This was extended to this year 2018. Our major focus is to make marriage more relevant and respectable as God intended it to be. Our children need to be born and raised in homes where there is love and security. I appeal to wives and husbands this Easter to repent of any shortcomings and make your marriage enjoyable by showing true love to your spouse and children, who are gifts from God.

When Jesus rose from the dead, the disciples had been shattered by his death and when he appeared to them in the upper room where they were hiding for the fear of the Jews, He restored their hope and confidence. **“PEACE BE WITH YOU”** (John 20:19) He gave them courage and new hope, they were greeted in the power of the resurrection. He commissioned them and empowered them. “When he had said this, he breathed on them and said, receive the Holy Spirit”.

We all need peace. Today we are reminded that Christ is risen and lives forever as our Saviour and Friend to give us His Peace and Joy. His Peace in a troubled dark and hurting world. Power, wealth (money) and knowledge of man are necessary but have their limitations but the power of resurrection is liberating and reconciling. Therefore, we have nothing to fear because we have Jesus Christ. He is indeed our Redeemer, Saviour and Friend and we await His glorious second coming for our eternal salvation. Yes He will come again because that is His promise in John 14:1-2

May the risen Lord Jesus give you all His peace and joy this Easter and always.
Amen!

Happy Easter to you all!