

TURNING POINT

When we hear the phrase *turning point*, we might think of sports: the turning point is not the end of a game, but the moment when it became clear what the outcome would be. A current example of a turning point is what we are all waiting for now: the day when the corona epidemic restrictions are lifted and we return to work, school, visiting family & friends, going to parks & restaurants.

The turning point—The Turning Point—of human history is the 1st Easter, the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. This is because of the hold that death has on the human race. All human beings have always known that they would someday die, but no human beings knew what would happen afterward. Something? Maybe nothing? People have held a range of different beliefs, but no one knew.

Until the Turning Point: the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. A small group of people in Israel 2000 years ago found out; they knew with certainty what happens after death. The small group saw it with their own eyes: they saw Jesus die a horrible bloody death on the cross, and on the third day they saw, alive, the Resurrection Jesus. This group was the Church Jesus established, the Catholic Church. There was the Blessed Virgin Mary, mother of the Church; there was St. Peter, the 1st Pope, the Rock on which Jesus built the Church; there were the other apostles, who were the first bishops and priests; there was St. Mary Magdalene, who announced the Resurrection to the apostles. They knew that if they followed Christ in life, by following His teachings and receiving His sacraments, they would follow Him in the Resurrection, when he comes again to judge the living and the dead.

Unlike those first Catholics, we didn't see Jesus die and we didn't see Him after He rose from the dead, so we must go on faith. We must decide whether or not we believe what they have passed on to us. Do I believe Jesus died on the cross and rose from the dead on the third day? Do I believe that if I follow His teachings and receive His sacraments, I will go to heaven? Do I believe He will come again to judge the living and the dead, and in the resurrection of the body?

Another thought regarding turning points: those who are present like to describe it to others. In sports we can read articles the day after a championship, each writer telling in his own way what he saw. When the corona epidemic subsides and we get back to our activities, I want to ask my family and friends to tell me what they're doing those first days: visiting family/friends, having a cookout, walking in a previously closed park, going to a favorite restaurant. The Gospel writers—Matthew, Mark, Luke, John—each describes in his own way what he saw on Easter morning. Their stories do not conflict; rather each provides more or less different details, just as we would expect of people describing The Turning Point of human history. This week, take a few minutes to read the last chapter or two of each of the four Gospels. It's fascinating to see the details that each writer was inspired to include.

A last thought on turning points is a reminder that they are not the end. The turning point of a game is not the end, and there is still work to be done; rather, it is the moment when it becomes clear how the game would end. The turning point of the corona epidemic is not going to mean the virus has been eradicated from the face of the earth, and there will still be work that needs to be done to control it; but at least we will see that it is subsiding and that we can get back to living our lives.

The Turning Point of human history—the Resurrection of Jesus Christ—was not the end of human history. There is still work to be done. The apostles knew this; they went on to preach the Gospel throughout the world, and to suffer and die for Christ. We still have work to do also; we have suffering to endure, and death to face. But because of The Turning Point, the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, if we follow His teachings and receive His sacraments, we know what happens in the end.

HAPPY EASTER!