

MAY 15, 2026 FATHER MICHAEL COUTTS

A 19th Century British poet, Christina Rossetti, writes a heart-touching poem called “A Better Resurrection.” She was grasping for hope, she was almost in despair, she was numb, she couldn't feel anything, and yet she was anchored in deep hope, deeper hope than in her despair.

She says, “I can't see any buds, or greenness, or blossoms, that bring forth, or tell of the resurrection, the resurrection that gives joy to my heart and gives me hope.” But there will be buds, there will be greenness, there will be blossoms, and so I pray, “O Jesus, rise in me.”

It's that same sense of despair that we see in our first reading from the Acts of the Apostles, with Paul in Corinth. He's been over there at the seaport. He's been preaching and nobody wants to listen to him. He's been preaching about Jesus Christ and nobody seems to care, and he wants to throw in the towel.

And God says, “The Gospel will be preached, and I will walk with you.”

It is in this spirit, moved by the Holy Spirit, that Paul decides that he is going to stay in Corinth for 18 long months. It is a time when the fledgling churches in different places, all the way from north in Philippi, coming down to Berea, coming down to Thessalonica, to Athens and Corinth, are just beginning to blossom. They're beginning to get a few followers.

And it is at this time that Paul will continue to preach the kingdom of God. And Luke has a paradigm, a pattern. Paul will always start with saying, “I need to proclaim the kingdom of God.” And then he will go out into the Agora, the marketplace, and he will proclaim: “Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again.”

And this will follow with an arrest. This has been the process that Saint Luke uses when Peter preaches and when the other Apostles preach.

But this time he is preaching in a Gentile place, so they arrest him, not because he is blaspheming against Jewish tradition, but they use a loophole in the law. In order to preach God, you have to be accredited. The Jews had a long history; they were an accredited religion, they could preach. But the Christians, they were just called Christians, and in Antioch were called Followers of the Way.

And so, rightly so, Sosthenes, who was the leader of the synagogue, had Paul arrested before Gallio the proconsul.

Now, the scrolls in Alexandria, or I think in Turkey, were found, where they said that Gallio was the proconsul in the year 51, 52 Anno Domini. This is about 18 years after the resurrection.

And Gallio was a smart proconsul. He looked at the situation and he says, “You know what? You all are just squabbling about small things that matter to you. If there's a riot over here, if there's a fight over here, I will step in and will stop it.”

Gallio's bright counsel and advice could be taken by many of our leaders today. They feel they can tackle every problem, and we've got a lot of problems. We've got health issues, we've got the infrastructure, we've got no clean water for many people, we've got refugees and migrants, we've got people who are displaced and homeless.

And our leaders, many of them think that they can make wild promises: “I'll solve it in the next week. I'll solve it within seven days of my rule.” And we know that in a few cases, some of these leaders are just puppets on a string, ruled by billionaires and moneybags.

But they could listen to Gallio, who said, “You deal with it yourselves.” And so said, so done.

Paul realized that he would preach the Gospel. He would preach the Gospel because the poor will always be there. Jesus himself said, “The poor will always be with you.”

And so, here he is in Corinth. He will spend not only 18 months there, and some scripture scholars say it's the longest time Paul has ever stayed in a fledgling church in order to bolster them up. I don't know whether that's true, because in Ephesus he spent over two years teaching the people, building up the Church in Ephesus, which is in Turkey.

And so from Corinth, he goes to Cenchreae. From Cenchreae, he would have gone to Turkey, but he goes by boat to Syria, and back to Antioch, where he started in the first place.

Here is Paul preaching the good news. He's preaching the good news because we have to continue to preach the good news, day in and day out, in our own parishes and in our own places.

Sometimes we can feel the same despair as Paul. We ask for volunteers, nobody seems to come. But we know that in every parish, there are men, women, and children who are concerned about the welfare of the people that are most vulnerable in the parish.

We have the Saint Vincent de Paul, people who will go out to the houses of the poor, the houses of the needy. And the beauty about this is that when they go there, they will make sure that they save each person's dignity and save each person's pride.

They don't come from a sense of arrogance: “I'm in charge, I've got the money, I've got this, and I'm going to help you.” No.

They treat them just like Jesus treated the disciples at the last supper. He acted as a servant and as a slave.

And so these volunteers from our parish, and we know them, you can look in every parish, you will never see them go with fuss and with great pomp and ceremony. They will go there with great humility. They will go there without any big fuss, and they will help people out.

And that is what Jesus says in our Gospel today. There will be pain, that is the reality. It's not that God wanted us to have pain, but the fact is there are people within us, and sometimes it's ourselves, who act selfishly, who act with arrogance, who act out of our ego.

And we don't care about the needs of those who are around us. We will cross the street in order to avoid a person who is poor. We will be busy, looking into our cell phones, in order to avoid looking into the eyes of people who truly need us.

Jesus said, "The poor will always be with you." But they need not be neglected.

And that is what we read in Psalm 113. And this is what it says: "I will put my trust in the Lord, and the Lord will not let me down. I will hope, and I will not hope in vain."

With this hope and with this trust, we can continue, like Paul, to proclaim the kingdom of God.

God bless you all.