

## **Easter Sunday: the Resurrection of the Lord**

April 16, 2017 11:30 a.m. St. Augustine Cathedral

In the name of Msgr. Osborn, Fr. Marotti, Fr. Vinh Le, and Deacon John, once again, I want to wish ALL of you a very happy, Blessed and Joyful Easter! Welcome to the Cathedral on this glorious Easter morning to one and all! It's nice that the timing of Easter this year coincides so well with all of nature that has been so "Easter-like" these last few days allowing the trees and flowers to come into full bloom. I hope that you have a wonderful day celebrating with family and friends, and that you'll enjoy that delicious Easter dinner we might all be anticipating later on.

For those of us here this morning, it's clear that we understand that celebrating Easter Mass is really the central focus of what Easter means. As we all sang together so beautifully in today's Psalm Response: "*This is the Day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it*".

I'm sure all the children present were excited to jump out of bed early this morning to see what the "Easter Bunny" might have left for them, and I hope that they (and their parents) will enjoy all those chocolate bunnies, jelly beans and Easter eggs. But, as we all know, it's not easy to get out of bed *every* morning. Some mornings, especially when we're tired or discouraged or afraid, we might just want to turn over and go back to sleep. Some mornings in particular when we feel sad because of the serious illness or death of a loved one, or a huge worry or big decision that we have to contend with, it's much more difficult to do.

We heard in our Gospel reading this morning that "*Mary Magdalene and the other Mary*", in spite of their great sense of loss over their dear Jesus' death and burial, got up very early on Sunday morning---before dawn---to go to the tomb to take care of anointing Jesus' body. There hadn't been time to do that on Friday, because the Sabbath was about to begin which would last all day Saturday. And so, as much as they may not have wanted to get out of bed because of their grief, they did so because of their Love for Jesus; because they wanted to take care of their beloved dead Jesus' Body.

It's also interesting to note who was *not* on the way to the tomb----none of the Apostles. They were still hiding out in fear, paralyzed and in shock, unsure what to do---what the future held for them---and incredulous that Someone so good as their Lord and Master could have been killed!

But for these two holy women, love was stronger than fear. As they slowly and sadly walked toward the place where Jesus' Body had been buried, the only thing on their minds was how they would get into the tomb since it had been sealed by a heavy rock.

That's when everything turned upside down---literally. St. Matthew told us there was an earthquake---and then he tells us: "*An Angel of the Lord descended from heaven, approached, rolled back the stone, and sat upon it.*" And he said to the women: "*Do not be afraid! I know*

*that you are seeking Jesus the crucified. He is not here, for He has been raised just as He said."*

This is what we come to Mass to celebrate on this Easter Sunday: the Resurrection of Jesus---the greatest event to take place in the history of the world---a truly "earth-shattering" event, like an earthquake. Jesus' Resurrection, and Jesus' Gift of the Holy Eucharist, are at the center of our faith---it's what defines us as Christian Catholics. It's because of Easter that we are obliged to come to celebrate the Eucharist, not just on Easter, but every Sunday. It's the reason why our God commands us to keep holy the Lord's Day, so that we can rejoice in what Easter means in our lives, and to be nourished by the Real Presence of the Risen Jesus in the Eucharist.

Once the earth stopped quaking, the Angel said to the women: "*Come, see the place where He was. Then go quickly and tell His disciples: He has been raised from the dead.*" As we can imagine, as they set out on the mission to "go and tell", they were confused and didn't quite know what to think. St. Matthew tells us that they were "*fearful*"---and who wouldn't be afraid in the face of earthquakes, Angels coming from the sky, and an empty tomb where Jesus' dead body was supposed to be. What did that all mean? But St. Matthew tells us that they were also "*overjoyed*". They knew in their hearts---in the depths of their beings---that their beloved Jesus was Alive! And to allay their fears and validate their joys, the Risen Jesus Himself appeared to them on the road, and repeated the Easter message: "*Do not be afraid....I am Risen.....Go and tell my brothers*".

My dear sisters and brothers in Christ, over the course of these last 40 days of Lent, we probably all made some Lenten resolutions---to pray more, to fast on occasion, to offer up sacrifices, to do works of charity. I trust that we have tried, to one degree or another, to do what we were urged to do on Ash Wednesday when ashes, the sign of our mortality, were placed on our heads with the words: "Turn away from sin, and be faithful to the Gospel". On this Easter Sunday, hopefully we find that we have made some spiritual progress this Lent. And I hope that we all find that we're in a better place in terms of our relationship with God, and more resolved to live our lives according to God's ways.

Easter is a Day to Rejoice not only because Jesus has been raised to New Life, but also because WE share In His New Life. Easter is a Day to remember that there is far more to life than what we experience day-in and day-out in the circumstances of the "real world" in which we live our lives. Easter is a Day to remember that we are people with a destiny---we're NOT just people who are human, living in a human world; we are people preparing in this world to live for eternity in the life of the world to come. Easter is a Day to remind ourselves that what we do NOW affects how we will live AFTER our own death and burial.

That's why the fact that we are baptized into Christ makes all the difference in the world. It is through our Baptism that we have become a vibrant part of the Body of Christ, and we share in Christ's victory over sin and death. As St. Paul said so beautifully in today's Second Reading: "*If then you were raised with Christ, seek what is above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God.*"

In just a few moments, in place of professing the Creed as we normally do every Sunday, we will be asked to renew our Baptismal Promises and then to be sprinkled with the newly-blessed Baptismal waters to renew us in our own Baptismal vocation and mission.

Easter is a time for all of us to remember that just as the two Mary's were given a mission, so too have we been given that same three-part mission: "Do not be afraid.....He is Risen....Go and Tell this Good News." We are called to go to our homes, to our places of work, to our families and friends, to those who share our faith, to those who have no faith, to those who reject the whole idea of faith, and to those who persecute others when they try to practice their faith---to go out to the whole world---and proclaim this Easter Good News: "*He has been raised from the dead.*" Perhaps, like the two Mary's there might be days when we're "fearful" of doing that; hopefully, there will be more days when we're "overjoyed" to do that because we know in our hearts and in the depths of our very beings: Easter is the TRUTH!

The most important thing is that we **go**.... that we give witness....that we live our Faith with joy and integrity, and that we share the Good News of Easter Joy. And as we do, it's very important to remember the message of Easter: "*Do not be afraid. He is not here. He has been raised. Go quickly and tell the world. Alleluia!*"

God bless you, now and always!