

April 1, 2018 St. Augustine Cathedral 11:30 a.m.

Easter Sunday: The Resurrection of the Lord

Once again, welcome---welcome---welcome! Welcome to our beautiful Cathedral on this most Glorious Feast of Easter! Welcome if you're back home visiting from elsewhere in the country; welcome if you've been away from the regular practice of your faith; welcome if this is your first time in a Church for a long time, and welcome to all for whom this is your regular Church home.

As we heard so beautifully proclaimed in our Psalm Response for today: "*Easter is the Day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it!*", because Easter makes all the difference in the world! And so in the name of Msgr. Osborn, all the priests here at the Cathedral, and Deacon Bouchard, I wish you all a very blessed, joyful and Happy Easter!

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) enjoy all those chocolate bunnies, jelly beans and Easter Eggs. Of course for Michigan Fans, the "Easter Bunny" came a little early last night as Michigan defeated Loyola in spite of Sr. Jean's powerful prayers, and now moves on to the Championship Game tomorrow night!

But of course, the reason why Easter is the most important Feast of the Year and the central mystery of our Christian faith is that because of Jesus' Suffering, Death and Resurrection, He has confronted, and defeated, the stranglehold that sin had on humanity and the distorted sense that human death was the final end. Because Jesus, both fully human and fully Divine, experienced the worst that the collective sin of the world could do to anyone, including dying, but because He did not stay dead, but rather was gloriously raised on the Third Day----that is "the game changer", and that's why Easter makes all the difference in the world---the difference between the old life of despair, defeat and death; resulting in being filled with Hope, sharing Jesus' Victory and inheriting the gift of Eternal Life. And that life-changing Good News, I hope, is what causes us to no longer be able to contain our joyful exclamations that we have had to keep silent for these last 40 days of Lent, but now proclaim over and over again: "*Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!*"!

At last night's Easter Vigil Mass, the joyful news of Easter began with this beautiful candle being lit from the New Fire, and then carried through this totally dark Cathedral proclaiming the joyful proclamation: "Christ our Light". Light represents the Risen Christ in the sense that He dispels the darkness that exists not just in the world, but within each of our lives, due to sin. We refer to Jesus as the Light of the World because He is Alive. And we, who have been "enlightened by Christ" are called to live our lives in that same Light. In just a few moments, we will all be asked to renew our Baptismal Promises. As we heard St. Paul tell us in today's Second Reading in his Letter to the Colossians: "*For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.*" It is our Baptism that brings us into the New Life we live in union with Christ, represented by that lighted candle.

Of course, it's this morning's Gospel passage from St. Mark that gives us the oldest record among all the Gospel writers of Jesus' Resurrection. As the holy women came to Jesus' grave very early on the morning following the Sabbath to anoint His dead Body, their biggest concern was how they would be able to roll the stone away from the entrance to the Tomb. But when they got there, they found the Tomb already open, and a young man---an Angel---waiting to give them the Message of Easter: "*You seek Jesus of Nazareth, the Crucified. He has been raised;*

He is not here.” And then the Angel gave them instructions: “Go and tell His disciples---and Peter.”

That was the first Easter proclamation. And that remains the basic Gospel mandate for the Church down through the ages. For 2,000 years, priests and people have been told to “Go” into the world, and “tell” whoever will listen to this, the greatest Good News ever known. Jesus has crushed the power of sin and the strong hold it tries to keep on each of us, and He has defeated the ultimate power of death. Because of Jesus’ Resurrection, we, who are baptized into Christ, will pass through our human deaths and rise with Him to eternal life.

Baptism is our common denominator. No matter how old we are, no matter how long we’ve been baptized, no matter how regularly or irregularly we practice our faith, no matter what title or function we might have in the Church---Bishop, priest, deacon, layperson---all of us are one with each other, and one with Christ through Baptism.

And that’s why we renew our Baptismal Promises each year on Easter, because they remind us who we are, and they challenge us to realize in a new way how important, and special, our Baptism makes us in God’s sight. On the day of our Baptism, we promised---we committed our lives---to being a member of the Body of Christ---to be One with Christ and with His Church, which includes all of us. When we answer “I Do” when we are asked whether we promise once again to “renounce” sin and Satan; to believe in God the Father, in Jesus Christ His Son, in the Holy Spirit, and in the holy Catholic Church”, we are promising to faithfully and joyfully follow Christ in every aspect of our lives. And all of us know that’s not an easy thing to do. In fact, our culture makes it more and more challenging to live good and holy lives.

And so, we need one another’s support, we need the graces of the Sacraments, especially the Holy Eucharist and the Sacrament of Penance, and the Devotions of the Church; and we need the grace of God and the courage and guidance that comes from God’s Holy Spirit.

Just as the Angel gave the original Easter mandate to the Holy Women on that first Easter morning, that remains the mandate that each and every one of us is asked to fulfill every day of our lives: “Go” into the parts of the world where we live and work and play and raise our families; and “Tell” our spouses, our families, our friends, our co-workers, our neighbors, the people we watch the Championship NCAA Game with---tell them in words, and perhaps even more so, tell them through our deeds of charity and works of mercy; tell them that Jesus is Alive. And if they want to see Him, I hope we can tell them that they can see Him in you, and me.

We are able to be up to this Easter Mandate to “Go and Tell” because of what we’re celebrating today: Easter! We can be up to the challenge to be faithful Disciples of Jesus because the Light of Christ dispels all darkness in our lives and lets us walk in the Light! We can be Joyful Witnesses to our Faith in the Risen Christ because God’s Word is faithful and true, and will always accomplish the purpose for which God has spoken it. And as uncomfortable as we might be in feeling up to the challenge of being Evangelizers---people who speak about Jesus to others and share the Good News of the Resurrection---we can be true Evangelizers because our Baptism into Christ has brought us into union with Christ and His Church.

We not only can be people who don’t just blend in with the rest of the crowd and go along with whatever is politically correct to say and do; but we need to be people who stand up against practices that create division, and speak out against attitudes that tolerate racism, and refuse to participate in what is becoming the acceptable ways of responding to differences through violence, disrespect or insults. And we can, and need to do that, because we promise to live our lives in the example of the Risen Lord Who is the Way, the Truth and the Life.

We have no need to be afraid or feel uncomfortable; we are never alone. We can faithfully, and joyfully, live our Baptismal Promises because we have Jesus Himself to be our Food and Drink in the Holy Eucharist; He lives within us, and then sends us forth in His Name to be His Presence in the world.

My brothers and sisters in Christ, living our lives as People of Faith in this world is not only possible, but necessary because of what we celebrate here on this glorious Easter Day, and because of what we hear proclaimed “**Jesus the Crucified has been raised.....Go, and tell!**” **Alleluia!** That is what makes all the difference in the world!

God bless you, now and always!