

Easter Sunday

2022

I take as my text today from St. Paul's Letter to the Colossians:

If ye be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.

Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be always acceptable in Thy Sight, O Lord, my Strength and my Redeemer.

Today is a most joyous and happy occasion for Christians everywhere. We celebrate the indisputable truth that Jesus Christ has risen from the grave proving that the Incarnation is real, that he is truly the Son of God Incarnate. We celebrate that which is the basic foundation of our faith.

He is Risen. He is Risen, Indeed!

That's the traditional Easter greeting from the earliest days of the Church and what a glorious day this is: Christ is risen.

Our Lord has overcome death and defeated Satan. He has freed us from the bonds of sin. Through the sacrifice of his Only Son, Jesus Christ, God has established a New Covenant with us, sealed with his Blood.

In our celebration of this glorious occasion, we are affirming something that no other religion can claim — faith in a living God, a loving God, revealed through his personal, tangible interaction with his creation.

We do not celebrate the death of someone who was merely a prophet; nor do we celebrate the death of the Incarnate Son of God; we celebrate his being alive, his Resurrection, the co-joining of his Soul with his risen Body, our Lord's triumph over the world, the flesh, and the Devil.

We celebrate the triumph of Perfect Love and Perfect Obedience. Through the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, who death could not hold; for whom the grave was merely the gate to Paradise; we have been given the hope and promise of eternal life.

With this Easter celebration, we affirm that Christianity is a living religion, that we worship a living God who has established a personal relationship with us and who has lived among us.

We affirm that the God we worship is all powerful, all knowing, and all loving.

And we affirm that the God we worship is not estranged from us but is ever present and shares Himself with us in a heavenly banquet, the Eucharistic Feast.

Indeed, in a most beautiful act of worship, the breaking of bread in the Holy Eucharist, we are joined with our Lord and Saviour, the Risen Christ, as we offer ourselves as living sacrifices, just as he continues to offer himself for us in the presence of our Heavenly Father.

The Holy Eucharist is a celebration, not of death, but of life; it is a living sacrifice in which we all share. As we receive the consecrated bread and wine, our lips touch the Body and Blood of Christ, God himself, and we are nourished and strengthened spiritually, even physically, by virtue of the power of the Holy Spirit to affect us wholly.

It is a Holy Communion wherein we are joined with our Lord through the sacramental offering of ourselves together with him to the Father.

As we celebrate the Risen Christ, St. Paul, in his letter to the Colossians, takes us beyond the events of this day into the future and our baptism. He opens up for us our understanding of the sacramental mystery of baptism.

As Christ died on the Cross for our sins and rose again from the dead to ascend to the right hand of God, something comparable happens to us in baptism: we, too, die; we die unto sin and we rise up again resurrected to a new life, a life in Christ.

The whole concept is so beautiful: when we choose Christ and are baptized, we become a new person. Our old person dies sacramentally, and a new person arises. We experience a rebirth.

How fitting it is that the Easter celebration takes place at this time of year, for what better reminder of the beauty of that rebirth than springtime when a rebirth of nature surrounds us.

And, truly, according to St. Paul's thinking, we rise up from baptism as a different person and our thoughts are no longer trivial, no longer concerned with earthly things but are set on things above.

As Paul says:

Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.

It's not a matter of divorcing ourselves from the world but, rather, putting it all into perspective. When we become Christians, our view of everything changes; we are no longer centered on the worldly but on things eternal and we must live as if this world no longer matters.

Live as if this world no longer matters — so difficult when we are bombarded from every direction and in all manner of means to the effect that we seem to be drowning, drowning in data in the midst of an information world, all our senses overwhelmed. Even more, we are now confronted with virtual reality as if this real world isn't enough.

Yet, despite the assault on all senses, despite the reality of the tremendous changes and challenges which we face daily, we have been given assurance as Christians that the seemingly impossible is possible — that the cares of the world can be put aside through faith in Jesus Christ whose resurrection we are celebrating today. That we can live as if the world no longer matters, separating the material from the spiritual and focusing on that which is above and to which we aspire, a heavenly, eternal home nurtured with Divine Love.

The world was forever changed on that first Easter Day. For us, who have been washed in Christ's Blood through baptism, the empty tomb and the empty Cross have become symbols of that change.

They symbolize the power of love: absolute, selfless love.

As Christians, we become direct recipients of that love when we center our lives on Jesus Christ. Not only the recipients of Divine Love but expected to share that Divine Love through the way we live our lives and in how we interact with others.

In essence, Christ must be our life. But what does that mean.

There is a simple analogy. How many times have we said about someone who is devoted to something in particular, such as sports, that sports **is** their *life*? Or perhaps we have said about a musician that music **is** their *life*.

What we are saying is that such people find life and all of life's meaning in sports, or music, or almost anything.

And that's the way it should be with us as Christians. Christ should be our life. We should find in Christ, life and all of life's meaning.

That doesn't make us any less part of the world, but Christ must be the most important thing in our lives, for he is life.

Now, in the light of the Cross, we can see worldly things for their true value. The power that flows from that Cross enables us as Christians to set our hearts on things above.

It is above, not in this world, but in heaven above where Christ is and from him flows all spiritual blessings and all the means of supporting a spiritual and heavenly life.

That is confirmed on this Easter Day. It is from heaven that the Bread of Life came into the world, the bread of life which nourishes us and strengthens us, the Bread that if a person eat thereof, he shall never die.

Easter Day confirms our hope of eternal life.

For us, even for all of God's creation, Easter is that glorious light shining forth from an empty tomb as the morning sun breaks forth to dispel the darkness and to announce a new dawn, a new day, renewed life, a new hope.

Jesus Christ is that Light, that Hope.

Christ's Death on the Cross reminds us of the great love of God, of God's desire to preserve us for himself, and the extent to which God will go to make it possible for us to be united with him eternally.

Christ's Resurrection on Easter Day reminds us that ours is a Living Faith that ends not in death but eternal life.

I am the light of the world; I am the truth and the life; I am the resurrection.

Christ is risen. He is risen, indeed.