

FR. JOHN'S HOMILY
Easter Sunday, April 17, 2022

This Holy Day of Easter has arrived. We entered into the Holy Week with the proclamation of "*Jesus, Hosanna to the Son of David*". A few days later Jesus gives Himself to us at the Last Supper, reminded us all that He would always be with us and what it means to partake of His Body and Blood. It about humble, loving service. On Good Friday we participate in the depth of God's love by the suffering, crucifixion and death of Jesus. There is nothing we go through in the life that our God did not enter into with us. He went to pit of Hell and Darkness to proclaim "*I am with you always,*" even into our time of darkness.

Easter is the gift of Jesus' Power, His transforming power of New Life. Today we begin the Easter Season, our 50-day meditation on the mystery of Christ's Resurrection. You can tell how important the event in the life our Church is, by how long we prepare for it, and how long afterwards we celebrate the mystery. The Advent – Christmas season, yes, it is important, but more important is the death and resurrection of Jesus - Lent- Easter- Pentecost Season. We all should be on high alert, like the emergency sounds of the storms recently reminded us to be aware, take shelter. Well, our spiritual alarm should be going off: Be Aware, Pay Attention. Make sure you get this message: The Easter Message. Because not only does our life depend upon it, but our eternal life depends upon it, that we get it, hear it, receive it, and live it.

The Easter message is written down for us in the New Testament. All of our Gospels tell us about the disciples' discovery of the empty tomb. It concludes by telling us that they did not yet understand that Jesus had risen from the dead. They would not fully understand until the time of Pentecost with the fullness of the Holy Spirit fell upon them. Then the empty tomb and the Resurrection of Jesus would take up its power in the hearts of these first believes. It would catch fire in their hearts. The details invite us to reflect upon a most amazing gift, that is faith in Jesus and his Resurrection.

Each of the four Gospels tells us that Jesus' empty tomb was first discovered by women. Which is very interesting since the women had no power or authority during this time. In the case of John's Gospel, the only woman attending the tomb is Mary of Magdala. Unlike the Synoptic accounts, John's Gospel does not describe an appearance of angels at the tomb. Instead, Mary is simply said to have observed that the stone that had sealed the tomb had been moved, and she runs to alert (warning of the message) Simon Peter and the beloved disciple. Her statement to them is telling. She assumes that Jesus' body has been removed, perhaps stolen. She does not consider that Jesus has been raised from the dead. Again reminding

us all they did not fully understand until the outpouring of the Holy Spirit fell upon them at Pentecost.

Simon Peter and the beloved disciple race to the tomb to see for themselves. The beloved disciple arrives first but does not enter the tomb until after Simon Peter. Some scholars believe that the presence of the burial cloths in the tomb offers evidence to the listener that Jesus' body had not been stolen (it is understood that grave robbers would have taken the burial cloths together with the body).

The Gospel passage concludes, however, that even having seen the empty tomb and the burial cloths, the disciples do not yet understand about the Resurrection. In the passage that follows, Mary of Magdala meets Jesus but mistakes him for the gardener. The transformation of Jesus into the Risen Lord, was so profound, so extraordinary that He couldn't even be recognized by one who loved Him.

Talk about a complete transformation. It is like those shows you see on TV, when one exercises, loses weight, they get a makeover, and they do look amazing. I can assure you it was nothing like the transformation of Jesus of Nazareth to the Risen Lord. This was a transforming power that nothing on this earth can ever get near, the transforming power of Jesus Christ. In my younger days as a Priest, I assisted Msgr. Jim Mancini on several exorcisms. The Holy Spirit is real, so is the Presence of Evil. I remember one lady, we performed the Exorcist several times, and there were many demons. You can imagine the life the lady must have led to be in such a very dark and tortured condition. After the final Exorcist prayers, you could tell the lady was different. Little did I know how different she would look until I ran into her eight months later. When she introduced herself, she stopped me in my tracks. I have never seen such a transformation - a change in a person's life before. I did not recognize her. You could see it in her eyes, her face, her walk that she was a completely different person. The power of this Holy Night, transforms lives, this is what the power of the Risen Lord does to lives and hearts who are open.

And knowing His love changes us for the better, making us true Children of God. I hope and pray you are experiencing it now, this Easter. Remember you get out what you put into it; if you have entered into this Holy Season, you are experiencing the transforming power of Jesus Christ.

In the weeks ahead, the Gospel readings from our liturgy will show us how the disciples came to believe in Jesus' Resurrection through his appearances to them. Our Easter faith is based on their witness to both the empty tomb and their continuing relationship with Jesus—in his appearances and in his gift of the Holy Spirit. The question we must ask ourselves this Easter Season, will the Easter Message be alive in our hearts as it was for the Early Believers. Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia.