

Easter Sunday 2014

First reading: Acts 10:34a, 37-43 *We ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead ...
everyone who believes in him will receive forgiveness of sins.*

Psalms 118 "This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad"

Second Reading: Romans 6:3-11 *We were buried with Christ through baptism...*

so we too might be raised from the dead and live in newness of life.

Gospel: John 20:1-18 *They did not yet understand the Scripture that he had to rise from the dead.*

I chose to use 9 more verses from chapter 20 of John's Gospel - so you could hear, as Paul Harvey would have said, "The rest of the story."

The last words of the Gospel I read were, "Mary of Magdala went & announced to the disciples, 'I have seen the Lord.' Then she told them what he had said to her."

And what did she tell the guys? She did it in Aramaic, but if she spoke Spanish it might have sounded like this:

♪ *Resucito, resucito, resucito, aleluya* ♪

It is in many hymnals, but the translation of the verses is not always accurate.

"La muerte, donde esta la muerte? Donde esta mi muerte? Donde su Victoria?"

Literally means: "Death, where is death? Where is my death? Where is its victory?"

"Alegria, alegria hermanos, que si hoy nos queremos es porque resucito."

Literally means "Rejoice, rejoice brothers & sisters, the one you are looking for is risen."

"Si con El morimos, con El vivimos, con El cantamos. Aleluya!"

Literally means "If we die with him, we will live with him, we will sing with him. Alleluia!"

When Christians of the Eastern churches, like the Ukrainian, Maronite, Melkite & Byzantine Christians, greet each other today they do not say, "Happy Easter!"

They use this greeting: Peter: "Christ is risen!" And the response is "He is truly risen!"

Would you try that? I will say "Christ is risen!" and you answer "He is truly risen "

That is how I will greet you today after Mass, and I invite you to say "He is truly risen! " back to me. It's OK if you forget or say "Happy Easter," but I want to plant those words in your minds because that is what the feast of Easter is all about for those who believe in Jesus.

Pope Francis - in speaking about this day - said this:

"the women who go to the tomb of Jesus to anoint Jesus' body continued to feel love, the love for Jesus which now led them to the tomb. But at this point, something completely new and unexpected happens, something which upsets their hearts and their plans, something which will upset their whole life ...

Newness often makes us fearful, including the newness which God brings us, the newness which God asks of us... we are like the apostles in the Gospel: often we would prefer to hold on to our own security, to stand in front of a tomb ... we are afraid of God's surprises [and] God always surprises us...

How often does Love have to tell us: Why do you look for the living among the dead? Our daily problems & worries can wrap us up in ourselves, in sadness and bitterness... and that is where death is. That is not the place to look for the One who is alive! Let the risen Jesus enter your life, welcome him as a friend, with trust: he is life! ...If you have been indifferent, take a risk, you won't be disappointed.

To remember what God has done and continues to do for me, for us, to remember the road we have traveled; this is what opens our hearts to hope for the future. May we learn to remember everything that God has done in our lives."

Why have you come here today to this Easter Mass?

Have you come to hear the story of the Resurrection of Jesus from the dead?

Have you come to break the bread of the Eucharist which he left us as a sacrament of his presence among us?

Have you come so you can experience new life?

How have you come to know your rising from the dead?

How have you experienced the resurrection in your life?

Mary of Magdala, Peter and the beloved disciple were at the empty tomb.

And each of them experienced the resurrection in different ways:

Mary rose from the death of her grief.

Peter rose from the death of his denial.

The beloved disciple rose from the death of his disappointment - with a crucified messiah and with Peter and the others who abandoned Jesus.

I have met the risen Christ in many surprising ways over the course of my life. I have met him in a man who has been incarcerated for 17 years and has grown into someone who inspires me by his faith and his compassion for others.

I have experienced the mystery of death and resurrection through a hurricane that took almost all my possessions, yet led to a deeper relationship with Jesus and the ones he loves and, this past February, I experienced the resurrection through the surprise of finding a new place to live and receiving his love through many who helped me move in and provided what I needed to continue my life and ministry here.

I have experienced the resurrection through the care of my family when my mother died, through the forgiveness of my own sins and through the gift of being able to serve in many parish communities.

Christ is risen in every recovering alcoholic and forgiven sinner, in my mother & father who are with him now & in all who have died in his grace, in every parish community that puts their trust in him. Christ is risen in you and in me, if we allow him to love us, forgive us and walk with us on our own life journey.

If *you* want to experience the resurrection, and come to understand the Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead, then you need to live the words of the renewal of baptism we will say in just a few moments. Then the words of St. Paul will be real and true: "We have been buried with Jesus through baptism, so that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might live a new life."

♪ Resucito, resucito, resucito, aleluya ♪

Do you know why we renew our Baptismal promises at Easter?

In the early church, Lent came into being as a time for most people to prepare for their baptism at the Easter Vigil.

Even when there is no one to be baptized, we are all invited to renew the promises that were made in our name, and which we confirmed as we grew up. It is like an anniversary of a wedding, when a couple renews the promises that they have lived over the years of their marriage.

Lent is a time for everyone who is baptized to look at our lives to see how we are living our baptismal promises - how we are living the Gospel of Jesus Christ. On Easter - at the vigil and on Sunday morning - we celebrate and renew the promises that were made at our baptism. That is what Easter is all about.

As we renew our Baptismal promises, we will be asked some questions. All we need is the courage to respond, "I DO", but our response is not complete until we begin to live what we say in words. You have already begun to live those words by coming here today, but we are all challenged to carry that life out from here to our families, to our community, to the places where we work and to the world.

When we say "I DO" to the words: "Do you believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth."

We are saying that the whole human race is one family and that we are all brothers and sisters. We are also accepting the responsibility to care for creation the way God cares for the earth he called "good."

When we say "I DO" to the words: "Do you believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried, rose from the dead, ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father."

We are saying that we cannot save ourselves but that we believe Jesus has won victory over death - without resorting to violence; we are saying that we will commit ourselves to follow the way of the Prince of Peace, and that we accept him as our only judge.

When we say "I DO" to the words: Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body and life everlasting."

We are saying the same creed as our brothers and sisters in the other Christian churches (since the word "catholic" in the creed does not mean only Roman Catholic, it means everyone who believes in Jesus - that is why it is not capitalized). We are saying that we trust in the power of God's Spirit to forgive our sins and to heal our divisions on earth and even to bridge the gap between us and those who have died, and are now a part of the communion of saints.