

FROM THE PASTOR
APRIL 9, 2023
EASTER SUNDAY

ON THE THIRD DAY HE ROSE
FROM THE DEAD

ET RESURREXIT TERTIA DIE

Dear Parishioners of Our Beloved St. Paul:

Praised be Jesus Christ and His Most Holy Mother Mary His Most Holy Mother!

“We bring you the good news that what God promised to the fathers, this day he has fulfilled to us their children by raising Jesus.” The Resurrection of Jesus is the crowning truth of our faith in Christ, a faith believed and lived as the central truth by the first Christian community; handed on as fundamental by Tradition; established by the documents of the New Testament; and preached as an essential part of the Paschal mystery along with the cross:

Christ is risen from the dead!
Dying, he conquered death.
To the dead, he has given life.

-Byzantine Liturgy, *Troparion of Easter*.

"Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here but has risen." The first element we encounter in the framework of the Easter events is the empty tomb. In itself it is not a direct proof of Resurrection; the absence of Christ's body from the tomb could be explained otherwise. Nonetheless the empty tomb was still an essential sign for all. Its discovery by the disciples was the first step toward recognizing the very fact of the Resurrection. This was the case, first with the holy women, and then with Peter. The disciple "whom Jesus loved" affirmed that when he entered the empty tomb and discovered "the linen cloths lying there", "he saw and believed". This suggests that he realized from the empty tomb's condition that the absence of Jesus' body could not have been of human doing and that Jesus had not simply returned to earthly life as had been the case with Lazarus (from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, #s 638 & 640).

Easter (referred to as the *Pasch* in the East) is not simply one feast among others, but the "*Feast of feasts*," and the "Solemnity of solemnities." The event of Jesus Christ's resurrection from the dead is the most unique in all of history. Had Jesus not risen from

the tomb, the Christian Faith would be like so many others; one of belief in Him as a great teacher of divine wisdom; yet nothing more. Indeed, we believe in the One who has the power to conquer the greatest of enemies: death itself. Our blessed Lord rose from the dead, but not a return to what His earthly life had been before. Christ's Resurrection is essentially different. In His risen body He passes from the state of death to another life beyond time and space. At Jesus' Resurrection His body is filled with the power of the Holy Spirit: He shares the divine life in His glorious state, so that St. Paul can say that Christ is "the Man of heaven."

We too share in the Divine Life; first through Baptism and particularly in the "Sacrament of Sacraments," the Most Holy Eucharist. As Catholics, we have the privilege and duty to weekly assist at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and, please God, always in the state of grace, to reverently receive the Real Presence of our crucified and risen Lord – the pledge of our future glory.

Mary Magdalene and the holy women, in their deep sorrow, were the first who went to the tomb to tend to the somber task of anointing the Lord's lifeless Body. To their utter amazement, however, they encountered not the dead but the Risen One.

As we are all aware this Easter is different from any other. Thanks be to God; we have been able to celebrate Holy Week and the Paschal Triduum this year. We have done so in a humble and simple way, but filled with great love, reverence, and joy. This will be a sad Easter for many, but Easter is the feast of hope. Many have lost loved ones since last year. Others have been adversely affected by the pandemic spiritually, psychologically, financially, and health-wise. But still we are consoled that for a reason beyond all our understanding, God has willed that you and I live in these times. Whatever evil God permits is only so that greater good can come from it. May we have that same Easter joy and amazement each time we encounter Him at Holy Mass and come away from the celebration to live and share the good news that Jesus Christ is risen... Yes – He *is* truly risen!

A Blessed and Holy Easter to all and may God bless and reward you for all generosity to St. Paul's and to me. Be assured that all of you are remembered in our Easter Novena of Masses.

In Jesus and Mary,
Monsignor James F. Pereda