

Alleluia, alleluia. This is the day the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad today. Alleluia.

My Brothers and Sisters,

The parish staff and I want to wish all of you a most blessed and joyful Easter. In a special way, we want to welcome all who have returned home to Little Flower for Easter and all of our visitors.

Today we celebrate Jesus' resurrection from the dead, his triumph over sin, suffering, sickness, and death. Today, therefore, we are surrounded by symbols of life: light, water, flowers, beautiful music, and lots of color.

Triumphing over sin, suffering, sickness, and death, the risen Christ became a life-giving Spirit. As Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "*So, too, it is written, 'The first man, Adam, became a living being, the last Adam a life-giving spirit'*" [1 Cor. 15:45]. We share in Christ's risen life through baptism. Paul wrote to the Romans, "*We were indeed buried with him through baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might live in newness of life*" [6:4]. In a few moments, we will all reaffirm our baptismal promises, once again rejecting sin and professing faith in Christ Jesus.

If we entered into the spirit of Lent through prayer, fasting, and almsgiving, today we celebrate not only Jesus' resurrection from the dead but also our own resurrection to new life in and through him. If we entered into the spirit of Lent, today we should be very different from who we were on Ash Wednesday. We should be less selfish and self-centered and more loving toward God and others, more self-revealing, more self-giving, more self-sacrificing.

The Church's primary celebration of Easter is the Easter Vigil. Last night our Elect, our former Catechumens and Candidates, now our Neophytes, were fully initiated into the Christian community through baptism or profession of faith, confirmation, and first Eucharist. Also, three Catholics completed their initiation into the Church through confirmation, and we welcomed one Catholic back to the Church.

However, we are not initiated into the Church through baptism, confirmation, and Eucharist simply for ourselves and our own salvation. In today's Gospel, the angel tells the women, "*Then go quickly and tell his disciples, 'He has been raised from the dead, and he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him.'*" On the way, they meet Jesus, who tells them essentially the same thing: "*Do not be afraid. Go tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see me.'*"

Both the words of the angel and the words of Jesus to the women are their words to us as well. Jesus established the Church not just for us to be saved but for us to share the Good News of Jesus with others. The heart of that good news is not only that Jesus died for us, but also that he rose glorious and immortal, overcoming sin, suffering, sickness, and death both for himself and for us. Nothing proclaims the resurrection of Jesus more powerfully than Christians who have been transformed into caring, compassionate, loving individuals and communities.

My brothers and sisters, at last year's Easter Vigil, Pope Francis reminded us, "Jesus no longer belongs to the past, but lives in the present and is projected towards the future; Jesus is the everlasting 'today' of God."¹

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¹Homily of Pope Francis, Holy Saturday, 30 March 2013, Saint Peter's Basilica.