

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 happy Easter. In a special way, we want to welcome all of our visitors and all who have returned home to Little Flower to celebrate Easter.

Today we are surrounded by symbols of life. Spring, the season of new life, began last Sunday. The days are longer and warmer, the sun shines more brightly, and flowers, trees, and grasses bloom. Likewise, our church is filled with symbols of life: the Easter candle, symbol of Christ risen, alive, and present; the baptismal water, symbol of the church, symbol of the new life of baptism; the beautiful flowers, especially the Easter lilies; the life-giving energy of our music; and beautiful and colorful decorations.

Today we celebrate the most important event in human history: Jesus' resurrection from the dead. On Easter Sunday, rising from the dead, Jesus triumphed over sin, suffering, sickness, and death. In Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians, we are told that having risen from the dead, Christ became a life-giving spirit [15:45].

Today we as individuals and as a parish also celebrate our own resurrection to new life in Christ. For forty days of Lent, through prayer, fasting, and almsgiving, we as individuals and as a parish have died with Christ, i.e., died to the selfishness and sin that is part of all of our lives, in order to rise with him.

Today the eight members of our community who received sacraments of initiation last night at the Easter Vigil celebrate their new life in Christ. For them, Lent was a time of intense preparation for Easter. During Lent, they celebrated the Rite of Sending, the Rite of Election at the Cathedral, and the three Scrutinies, were anointed with the oil of catechumens if unbaptized, and received the cross, the primary Christian symbol, and three of our foundational documents, the Creed, the Our Father, and the Ten Commandments.

Today we as a parish celebrate the addition of these eight new men and women to our parish family. In today's Gospel we are told that when the women returned from the tomb, they announced to the eleven apostles and all the others all that had happened at the tomb. The women were the first witnesses to Jesus' resurrection. These eight men and women who received sacraments of initiation last night will enrich our community by joining their voices to ours in sharing the Good News of Jesus' resurrection from the dead and the power of his resurrection in our own lives.

My brothers and sisters, in today's Gospel, the angels said to the women, "*Why do you seek the living one among the dead? He is not here, but he has been raised.*" In his 2013 Easter Vigil homily, Pope Francis captured the deepest meaning of these words of the angels:

Jesus is not dead, he has risen, he is alive! He does not simply return to life; rather, he is life itself, because he is the Son of God, the living God.... 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

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

¹Homily of Pope Francis, Holy Saturday, 30 March 2013, Vatican Basilica, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2013/documents/papa-francesco_20130330_veglia-pasquale.html.