

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 you 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. Having been baptized into Christ, having entered more deeply into the mystery of his dying and rising during Lent and Holy Week, today we also celebrate our own resurrection to new life with him, our triumph over sin, suffering, sickness, and death. Therefore, today we are surrounded by symbols of life: the Easter candle, symbol of Christ risen, alive, and present, the beautiful flowers, especially the Easter lilies, and the other colorful decorations.

However, Jesus' triumph was even more evident last night. Throughout this past year, but especially during the season of Lent, our Neophytes (our former catechumens and candidates) have entered into the mystery of Jesus' dying and rising. Last night, they were configured to Christ through the reception of the sacraments of initiation—baptism, confirmation, and Eucharist. Their challenge going forward will be, with your help and support, to continue to “grow into the likeness of the risen Christ,”¹ to continue to become the best version of themselves.²

Most of us, I think would agree that we are living in scary times. If we follow the news, we are constantly told that so many people, especially young people, are anxious, fearful, and/or depressed. In today's Gospel, both the angel and Jesus tell the women not to be afraid.

One author has argued that there are four basic human fears: the fear of failure, the fear of rejection, the fear of pain, and the ultimate fear, the fear of death.³ During his passion, Jesus had to confront all of these fears. That Jesus had these fears, especially the fear of death, is evident in his prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane: “*Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass me by*” [Mt. 26:39].

In his passion, death, and resurrection, Jesus confronted and overcame these four human fears for himself and for us. Having risen from the dead, Jesus gives us hope. Since we share his resurrected life through our baptism, his resurrection guarantees that we can triumph over sin, suffering, sickness, and death, that we can triumph over the fear of failure, the fear of rejection, the fear of pain, and the fear of death.

In his Easter homily last year, Pope Francis focused on the women who came to the tomb. He said that “*they saw, they heard, they proclaimed.*”⁴ In Matthew's Gospel, an earthquake marked the resurrection of Jesus, and an angel rolled back the stone and sat on it. We are told the guards were shaken with fear of the angel and became like dead men. On the other hand, the angel told the women not to be afraid. The angel told them Jesus had risen and was going to Galilee where they would see him. However, Jesus himself appeared to them on the road, greeted them, and told them not to be afraid. He then charged them to tell the disciples to go to Galilee where they would see him. They saw the empty tomb, and they encountered Jesus on the road. They listened to the angel and to Jesus. They proclaimed to the apostles Jesus' message to go to Galilee.

My brothers and sisters, our challenge today is to see, listen, and proclaim. We are called to see the signs of Jesus' presence, power, and mercy in our lives and in the lives of others. We are called to listen to the voice of Jesus speaking to us within the depths of our being and through others. We are called to proclaim to others our experience of Jesus and the power of his resurrection in our lives.

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1. Preface of the Holy Eucharist II, *The Sacramentary*, (New York: Catholic Book Publishing Co, 1974), P48, p. 469.
2. Matthew Kelly, *Rediscovering Catholicism: Journeying Toward Our Spiritual North Star*, (Cincinnati, Ohio: Beacon Publishing, 2002, p. 69. "...to become the-best-version-of-yourself."
3. Don Kimball, *Power & Presence: A Theology of Relationships*, (San Francisco: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1987), p.'s 75-107.
4. Easter Vigil in the Holy Night of Easter, Homily of His Holiness Pope Francis, Vatican Basilica, Holy Saturday, 16 April 2022, <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2022/documents/20220416-omelia-veglia-pasquale.html>.