

*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, especially 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 on March 19. 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 soon-to-be 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.

However, faith in the resurrection of Jesus is not always easy. As we celebrate Jesus' triumph over sin, suffering, sickness, and death and our own resurrection to new life in Christ, we wonder why there is still so much sin, so much suffering, so much sickness, and so much death in our own lives, in the lives of those we love, and throughout the world. If Christ has indeed become a life-giving spirit, we wonder why we and so many other Catholics throughout the world struggle to believe in the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist.

Last night the eight members of our community who received the sacraments of initiation at this Easter Vigil celebrated 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. They were anointed with the oil of catechumens if unbaptized. They received the cross, the primary Christian symbol, and three of our foundational documents: the Creed, the Our Father, and the Ten Commandments.

My brothers and sisters, 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 the women who went to the tomb were told to go and tell Jesus' disciples and Peter, "*He is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him, as he told you.*" The women, then, were the first witnesses to Jesus' resurrection. These eight men and women who received the 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.

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