

EASTER SUNDAY

The Reason For Hope

Why do you seek the living ones among the dead?

“The Lord is risen.” ... “He is risen indeed.” This may have been the traditional greeting of Christians in the early church. The first person would say, “The Lord is risen,” and the other person would respond with, “He is risen indeed.” For those of us who know the Easter story we are no longer shocked by hearing that Jesus is risen from the dead. And sadly for many it has lost much of its significance if not total meaning. As believers we are called to ever be shocked and amazed and continually go deeper into the meaning of this Good News, that we will also be resurrected at the end—that we will have life forever with Jesus!

After having walked with Jesus in our Lenten journey, on Easter Sunday we celebrate the goal of all Christians: Christ’s victory over sin and death. Christ will love forever and His triumph is our triumph. Jesus invites us to celebrate His resurrection with Him.

What areas of your life need to be changed with the new life Jesus brings?

How willing and open are you to receiving it?

How did you celebrate this great feast in the life of Jesus?

How will you share this happiness with others?

Leader: Let us pray...

Good and gracious God,

You restored life to us by raising your Son from death. Help us to focus on the joy of new life we’ve received through your Son, Jesus. In thanks and praise, we pray.

All: Amen.

Reflection: "Mary Magdalene waits for Sunday"

The men who didn't see it
will never understand
The soldiers and the passersby
The spectacle was grand
The mocking and the insults, the humiliation and the shame
The agonizing torture
The desperate cries of pain
The blood and water dripping
Like dirty, wounded rain
How could God let such a beautiful man suffer like this?
Not even the apostles
Could understand our loss
All day long I watched him die
While hanging on that cross
Every breath struggled, sharp and jagged, every movement excruciating
His other friends just left him
They hid or ran away
Just a few sad women left
We knew we had to stay
Why did the men abandon him? Was it fear? Was it guilt? Was it the pain of watching?
He spoke to John and Mary
He sipped that wine and died
They took his body from the cross
The women watched and cried
Nicodemus and Joseph never said a word, just silently laid him in the tomb
The women cried, the women sobbed
And we are weeping still
I do not understand how this
Can be the Father's will
But whatever Jesus told me, I try to believe
So now it is the Sabbath
A day of rest and sorrow
We cannot go anoint his skin
'Til Sunday. 'Til tomorrow.
I try to remember every conversation we ever had, and listen to it, over and over
A strange and haunting Saturday
It's lingered much too long
My memories are sharp and clear
My grief is dark and strong
But tomorrow, when we go to his tomb, who will roll back the stone for us?

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What surprised you? What may have been confusing? What seemed strange to you?

Now let us listen to God's word:

Luke 24:1-12

Link: www.usccb.org/bible/readings/bible/luke/24:1

What role did the women play?

Luke presents the women as the first witnesses to Jesus' resurrection. They are responsible to bring the Good News to the apostles, who see the men dressed in white and to see the empty tomb.

Since the Middle Ages, the church has recognized Mary Magdalene as the "apostle to the apostles" a missionary disciple. She earned this title being the first to recognize the Lord and reveal this to the other apostles according to Luke.

Can you think of other women you know personally or not that are visible apostles-missionary disciples?

The best way to live the resurrection is to continually love and renew the Church. This is simply because the church was born at Christ's resurrection and it is through her that we enjoy the wondrous gifts of forgiveness, strength of the Holy Spirit, community, and hope in eternal life.

Young people have a very important role in the renovation of the Church because of your energy, spirit, passion for justice, and longing for love and community. So we ask you:

What would a young church faithful to Jesus be like? How missionary is the Church to youth who thirst for Jesus? What can you do to become a better missionary disciple of Jesus?

Leader: Let us pray...

Jesus, you brought us the Good News that's almost too good to be true. Bless us with the courage to believe it and proclaim it.

All: Amen.

The Reason for Hope

“Have you come to believe because you have seen me?”

“To see it, is to believe it.” This is a common phrase and sentiment in our secular culture and something we can imagine the Apostle Thomas saying at the time of Jesus’ Resurrection. It might even be something that we have said or thought ourselves, at times with good reason. And yet, as Christians we are called to have faith even when we cannot see.

What are some examples these times or situations?

At times we just “gotta have faith.” Do you know people with such great faith that they always seem to have hope, even in the most difficult of circumstances?

Leader: Let us pray...

Lord, help us to increase our faith. Allow us to become attentive so we might hear Your call of discipleship in our lives. Give us the courage to respond to You and strengthen our commitment to making You the center of our lives so that we may in turn share Your love with others.

All: Amen.

Activity

Walk of Faith

Have people pair up as partners. One partner is blind-folded and must walk through an obstacle course. Place some things to represent challenges on the ground or floor. The other partner tells the blind-folded partner where to walk. Have partners switch roles and then discuss, using the following questions:

How much did you have to value and believe in the words of the person who was guiding you?

How did you feel at the beginning?

Did this feeling change as you progressed? Why or why not?

Now let us listen to God's word:

John 20:19-31

Link: <http://usccb.org/bible/readings/040713.cfm>

Notice how Thomas doubted the witnesses of the Risen Jesus. Notice then how Jesus, with patience and mercy, appears to Thomas in person to foster his faith. We, too, doubt which is natural, since faith involves accepting and telling of Jesus without having seen Him in person. In other passages of the Gospels, it is made clear that Jesus can be found in people whose lifestyles reflect Christ. Similarly, as we experienced on the "Walk of Faith," we need to value the testimony of disciples.

How strong is your faith in Jesus?

Are you willing and able to be a witness of the Risen Christ to others - to be His missionary?

3RD SUNDAY OF EASTER

The Reason for Hope

“Feed my sheep.”

Note: Gather some sample corporate mission statements to share with the group.

Do you know what a mission statement is? Most companies and organizations have them, let's take a look at some of them.

What is the purpose of the statements? What are they trying to convey to the world about who they are?

Did you know that the Church also has a primary mission? To proclaim the Good News of Jesus to all! And YOU are an important part of this mission. By our baptism Jesus has called us to take part in this supreme mission of His Church.

Now let us listen to God's word:

Read John 21:1-19

Link: <http://uscce.org/bible/readings/041413.cfm>

What caught your attention most about this miraculous fishing trip?

This passage is filled with several images and symbols of our Church and what it should be and do.

Following Jesus is indicated in the fishing the disciples manage once they follow His words. Jesus always comes to us where we are, it is up to us to listen and do what He says.

Our evangelizing mission is symbolized with the action of casting a net into the sea and the one hundred and fifty-three big fish which was the number of nations known to the Jews at this time.

What other symbols or images do you hear in this passage?

What is Jesus asking Peter and us to do when He repeatedly says, "Feed my sheep"?

Activity

A Personal Mission Statement

Write a personal mission statement that describes your core identity and purpose. Is following Jesus and being His missionary disciple present? Why or why not?

Leader: Let us pray...

Lord Jesus, I place myself at Your service to do whatever work you need me to do to help bring your Love to all. Dear Lord, I wish to serve you with all my heart and mind, give me the strength to never stop because to serve others is to serve You.

All: Amen.