

# ***Easter Vigil and Easter***

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- Today Christian voices ring out all over the world: Alleluia, The Lord is risen, alleluia!
- “*Alleluia*” is a combination of two Hebrew words: “*hallelu*”, meaning “praise”, and “*Yah*”, short for the name of God in the OT, a name meaning “I AM”.
- And so “hallelujah” simply means “Praise God”
  
- This source of praise and joy is, of course, the Resurrection of Jesus the Christ—and with His resurrection he opens the gates of Heaven to humanity...gates which were closed by the sin of man.
- This was His whole purpose for coming to earth—God taking on human flesh in the Incarnation—which means “the enfleshment”.
- He came to live a human life with all its troubles and temptations, and to spend several years teaching us through His Word and example.
- In order to save us from the punishments that we deserve by our crimes against God and man—commonly called “sin”—He took our punishment upon Himself as He allowed Himself to be crucified, so much does God love us and desire us to be with Him in Heaven.
- And today we celebrate His resurrection from the dead—a very real, very historical event, and not simply a “symbol” that naysayers might try to say.
- Why else would the apostles, who were hiding like a bunch of bunch of scared mice after Jesus was crucified, suddenly go forth to proclaim Christ to the world...even to being martyred to death.
- No explanation makes sense except that Jesus truly rose from the dead and appeared to them.
- Why else would this Church of ours have lasted 2000 years... despite the best efforts of many kingdoms and nations—and sometimes even from those within it—to destroy it...and yet it is still going stronger than ever? How else unless the Holy Spirit were truly within it and sustaining it?

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- Because, as many authors have noted, if Jesus were not God, what He said would make Him either a charlatan or a madman!...saying things like “*no one comes to the Father except by me*”, and “*unless you eat my flesh and drink my blood, you have no life in you.*”
- No; the only viable explanation is that God has sustained our Church throughout these two millennia by His grace...a grace not given to falsehood, but to truth.
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- By Jesus’ resurrection He opens the doors of Heaven that were up to then closed to mankind—conquering even death, and by doing so allows us to conquer death as well.
- Because He is the firstborn from the dead. Where Jesus has gone, His faithful are called to follow.
- If we follow His Word and example and life, He lifts us up in death to live with Him—the reward for seeking to do what is right and good in our lives...to live as God created us to live.
- Upon that hinges salvation...and those who do not live as God teaches will have no share in the blessed resurrection, but rather, as Jesus tells us, will rise only to be condemned.
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- So...how much do we love God in return for all the blessings He gives us?
- Do we do the little that He asks of us in return for all that He has given us?
- Do I help those in need of help? Is this one of the few Masses I go to every year, or do I obey God’s command to keep holy the Lord’s day...which we do by coming to Mass and sharing in this sacrifice of Christ each week...this mere 1 of 168 hours in the week?
- The Israelites would stone to death one who did not observe the Sabbath...who simply would not rest on the 7<sup>th</sup> day.

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- How much greater is our Sunday observance in which we commemorate the eternal rest that God prepares for us in Heaven...which the faithful will realize by their own resurrection.
- Martyrs died for the privilege of adoring God in the Mass... receiving Jesus' Body and Blood in the Eucharist.
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- It is impossible for us to "merit" Heaven. If I fed and clothed the world, cured every sickness, solved all conflicts...it would be useless without faith in Christ...for Jesus says: "*Without me you can do nothing.*"
- But we "merit" Heaven by our faith and our desire for it...and true faith is not mere lip service—to say but not to do—but rather follows His teaching and example...confessing our sins when we stumble, and coming to the table of the Lord on Sundays to be strengthened by the manna of His flesh.
- Jesus has indeed broken the chains of sin and death for us...but only if we accept him in our lives—accept Him as Savior and God, and follow the path He has laid before us—to love God above all ...and to love our neighbor as ourselves.
- So, indeed—hallelu-jah!...praise God. Rejoice on this wonder-filled night (day)—for we who would be without hope have been saved from eternal death and punishment.
- Turn to God with your whole heart. This is what is Good; this is what is right. As scripture says: *Before man is life and death; he is given whichever he chooses.*
- So take the grace offered to you this night (day) to follow Him with your whole heart, so that you may come to know life beside Jesus in Heaven, and know that eternal bliss and contentment which comes with being held in the arms of God...forever.