

Easter Vigil and Easter

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- Today Christian voices ring out all over the world: “Alleluia, The Lord is risen, alleluia!”...the word “*Alleluia*”, from the Hebrew “hallelu-jah”, meaning “Praise God”.
- As I mentioned in the homily for Good Friday, the Passion of Christ was bittersweet—so very bitter in recalling the sorrows and agonies of Our Lord, His Blessed Mother, and those saints courageous enough to stand with Him upon Calvary’s hill.
- And yet...paradoxically...so very sweet as well...in our realization that Jesus—God—has done all of that for us...for you, for me... out of sheer gratuitous love for us...despite our faults, despite our failures, despite our treacheries of sin.
- A true love without boundaries...a love saving nothing for Himself, even to the sacrifice of His very life that we might be saved from the eternal consequences of sin.
- A love which demonstrates the nature of what love truly is... because He IS love.
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- Before God created, He dwelt in total happiness...in need of nothing whatever...in the absolute loving communion of the three divine persons.
- But...it is the nature of love to give of itself...and God created Man out of sheer gratuitous love...in order to have others upon whom to bestow His love.
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- And during this Paschal season, He grants us a glimpse of the ocean of love He has for us...
- ...not only going to His death upon the cross to satisfy justice in redeeming us from our sins, but to also to subdue death itself...to open up the gates to eternal life.
- We say in our creed that after His death He descended to the dead.
- Abraham, Isaac, Jacob...the sons of Jacob...Moses, Joshua, Elijah...all the righteous prior to Jesus were held in a state of

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waiting prior to the Resurrection, because Jesus had not yet open those Heavenly gates.

- The Catechism tells us: *“It is precisely these holy souls, who awaited their Savior in Abraham’s bosom, whom Christ the Lord delivered when He descended into hell.”* (CCC 633)
- ...for, as we read in 1 Peter: *“Christ also died for sins once for all...that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit... (1Peter 3:18-19)...this is why the gospel was preached even to the dead, that though judged in the flesh like men, they might live in the spirit like God.”* (1 Peter 4:5-6)
- And as we read from an ancient Easter homily, Jesus comes to them with words such as these: *“I order you, O sleeper, to awake. I did not create you to be a prison in hell. Rise from the dead, for I am the life of the dead.”* (CCC 635)...for, henceforth, the risen Christ holds “the keys of Death” to release His faithful from its bondage.
- But now...Heaven is open to all who seek Him...all who seek to follow Him. As we read in John’s Gospel: *“...to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God...”* (John 1:12)
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- So, today...truly, *“hallelujah”!*...for in the Resurrection there is no bittersweet; only sweetness itself. There is no sorrow; only the joy of the empty tomb...a mother reunited with her only Son she saw die upon the cross...the Risen Christ...who opens the doors not only for eternal existence, but for eternal life.
- As St. John writes: *“Jesus Christ [is] the first-born of the dead...”* and St. Peter says of the faithful: *“...you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.”* (1 Peter 2:9)