

Reflection for Easter Sunday

Jesus is alive. He has conquered death and is here among us. His resurrection opens the way of hope and assures us that injustice, pain and death can be overcome. We are surrounded by signs of new life in the resurrection. We can see in the resurrection, hope for the future. As we reflect on Jesus' final journey, we pray for the strength to live each day as people transformed through God's love. May we radiate God's love to all our sisters and brothers throughout the world. CAOD's Closing Prayer for the 15th Station of the Cross

As we gather at the Easter Vigil, Easter Sunday Mass, or any Mass in the Season of Easter we embrace the fact that the tomb is empty that Jesus has risen from the dead. The empty tomb to all who witnessed it on that first Easter Sunday and all who have seen and heard of it since is a testimony of God's transformative love. It is amazing to think that it is in something missing, the body of Jesus, that we as Catholics find hope today and hope in the future. If the tomb of Jesus had not been empty, then no hope would have been found.

The empty tomb spoke deeply to the early Church so much so that the Easter egg to the early Christians has been seen as a symbol of the resurrection of Jesus. The egg is seen as representing the tomb from which Christ rose. The hen's egg has had a role in the celebration of Easter since the 4th century. The tradition of decorating eggs comes from the Orthodox Church coloring eggs red to signify the blood that Christ spilled for our salvation. It was in the Middle Ages that decorated eggs started to be exchanged on Easter Sunday. In Germany in the 16th Century Easter egg hunts started. The Easter egg hunts symbolized the search for the empty tomb and the Risen Lord.

Today after the 9:00 AM Mass we will have our traditional Easter egg hunt on the front lawn of the Church. There will be of course other Easter egg hunts at parks and at homes throughout our town. I wonder how many people will think of the fact that as they gather for the Easter egg hunt, they are carrying on a tradition that started in the 16th Century and the search for eggs symbolizes the search for the empty tomb and the Risen Lord. The message of the empty tomb has spoken to followers of Jesus Christ from the very first Easter Sunday.

There are three Gospel Readings that can be read this weekend as we embrace the empty tomb and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. For the Easter Vigil the Gospel reading is taken from the Gospel of Luke recounting what took place when Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Mary, mother of James, arrived at the tomb early in the morning. The stone is rolled away, Jesus is not in the tomb. Two men, Angels, appear to the three women stating that Jesus is not dead, and they should not look for Him among the dead. This is all the three women needed, for them to know and believe that Jesus had risen from the dead. It is permissible for this Gospel Reading to be read at all the weekend Masses. The next Gospel Reading can be read at all the Easter Sunday Masses, and it is taken from the Gospel of John in this reading we hear of Peter and John arriving at the tomb of Jesus, when John the Beloved Apostle entered the tomb and saw that Jesus was not there, scriptures state "*he saw and believed.*" St. John did not need an explanation, he did not need a reminder what Jesus had foretold that He would rise from the dead, all he needed was the empty tomb. The lack of Jesus was for St. John a message of hope and a reminder that God fulfills His promises. The final Gospel Reading is from the Gospel of Luke and can only be read on Easter Sunday at an afternoon or evening Mass. In this Gospel Reading we hear of two of Jesus' Disciples on the first day of the week traveling to Emmaus from Jerusalem. On their way to Emmaus they encounter Jesus, they do not recognize Him for He is risen from the dead. They tell Him about everything that had happened. Including the three women going to the tomb in the early morning, that very day and not finding Jesus. Once the two disciples reached Emmaus with Jesus, they discover Him to be their Savior in the breaking of the bread.

All three of the Gospel Readings for our celebration of the resurrection of our Lord, are all rooted in the empty tomb. As we celebrate the joy of the Easter Season, may we not lose sight of the Lenten Journey that has brought us to this moment. Forty days to emptying ourselves of the things that pull us away from God, so that we can be readying to embrace the empty tomb and understand its true meaning. The empty tomb provides a message of the complete love that God has for us. It is only through the empty tomb that we can truly embrace the joy and meaning of Easter, the resurrection of our Savior.

My prayer for each one of you on this Easter Sunday and throughout the Season of Easter is that the empty tomb brings you to the joy of Easter. I pray that this Easter Joy brings you and your loved ones much peace and consolation, throughout the Season of Easter.