

My brothers and sisters, we have spent these days and weeks walking with the Lord. We have spent forty days in the desert seeking deeper conversion and a more intimate encounter with Christ. We welcomed Him into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday with the waving of palm branches and shouts of Hosanna. On Holy Thursday, we commemorated His Last Supper with His Apostles and our Lord's gift of the Eucharist. And on Good Friday, we venerated the wood of the cross on which hung the salvation of the world. Having journeyed with the Lord, we now stand before the great sign of hope and joy, we stand before the empty tomb. We look with Peter and John, and by the gift of faith, we see and believe that Christ is risen from the dead

The Resurrection of Christ on this Easter Sunday is the central mystery of our faith. If Christ had not been raised from the dead, then all that we have celebrated since Ash Wednesday would be in vain. If Christ had not been raised from the dead, then Jesus Himself would be a fraud, an imposter, a charlatan. But the tomb is empty because Christ has been raised.

In the Resurrection we find the source of our faith and our hope. In the Risen Christ we find our reason to believe that Jesus is Lord, that He has the power to conquer even sin and death. In the Risen Christ, we, too, are offered a share in the Resurrection. Jesus rising from the dead offers us the opportunity to rise above the ancient curse of death.

Now this may seem to the world to be no more than the language of pious devotion, but not for us. For us believers, this share in the Resurrection is made real in a specific and definitive action of Jesus Christ and His Church - in the sacrament of baptism. St. Paul speaks of this baptism in the Letter to the Colossians: “For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ your life appears, then you too will appear with Him in glory.” This death that St. Paul speaks of is our baptism. In baptism, we die with Christ and are buried with Him. The Fathers of the Church often refer to the baptismal font as a tomb. At our baptism, we died with Christ and we were buried, we were hidden with Him. And as we come up out of the waters of baptism, we are awakened from the tomb of spiritual death; we rise again with Christ. Baptism is our share in the Resurrection.

Last night at the Easter Vigil, our share in the Resurrection of Christ was displayed vividly. After we Blessed the new fire and the Easter Candle in front of the church, Deacon Jim carried that single flame into the church, which was in complete darkness. That single flame of the Easter Candle represents Christ, the light of the world, the one who is risen from the dead. And soon, that light began to be spread to all of us, as each of us lit our own candles. Soon this dark church was aglow with the light of faith. This powerful symbol shows us our call as Christians.

We who have received the light of Christ are called to carry that light out into the darkness of our world. Through our faith and our witness, Christ will scatter the darkness of sin and death. He will defeat the evil foe who is bent on our destruction. Through baptism we share in the Resurrection of Christ, the light of the world; and so we too become light for the world

Last night during the Easter Vigil, that light of faith was handed on to five young people who were baptized and to three men who were received into the Church. These new Catholics have all been enlightened by Christ so that they too can live in the light of Christ, so that they too can be a light for the world. Let us keep them in our prayers as they walk this new road of Christians discipleship as Catholics.

In a moment all of us will have the opportunity to renew the promises of our own baptism. Once again we will renounce Satan and all his works and all his empty show. Once again, we will profess our faith in God - the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. This renewal of our baptismal promises is an occasion for us to recommit ourselves to the Lord. It is an opportunity to strengthen of our life of prayer and our practice of the faith. Today we can draw near to the Lord once again and enjoy the glory of His unending light.

My friends, the tomb is empty, the Lord is risen from the dead and we have become sharers in His Resurrection. As we renew the promises of our baptism, let us recommit ourselves to being true disciples of Christ. May our sharing in the of the Resurrection of Christ through baptism increase in us the desire to share also in His holiness.