

March 31 Easter

Easter is the greatest and the most important feast in the Church. It marks the birthday of our eternal hope. “Easter” literally means “the feast of fresh flowers.” We celebrate it with pride and jubilation for three reasons:

1) The Resurrection of Christ is the basis of our Christian Faith, for it proves that Jesus is God. That is why St. Paul writes: “If Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain; and your Faith is in vain... And if Christ has not been raised, then your Faith is a delusion, and you are still lost in your sins... But in fact, Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep” (I Cor 15:14, 17, 20). In the words of the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC #638): “The Resurrection of Jesus is the crowning truth of our Faith in Christ, a Faith believed and lived as the central truth by the first Christian community; handed on as fundamental by Tradition; established by the documents of the New Testament; and preached as an essential part of the Paschal mystery along with the cross...” If Jesus Christ did not rise from the dead, then the Church is a fraud and Faith is a sham. But if Jesus really did rise from the dead, his message is true! Without the Resurrection, Jesus would have remained forever a good person who had met a tragic end. People would remember some of his teachings, and a handful of people might try to live according to them. All the basic doctrines of Christianity are founded on the truth of the Resurrection. “Jesus is Lord; He is risen!” (Rom 10:9) was the central theme of the kerygma (or “preaching”), of the apostles.

2) Easter is the guarantee of our own resurrection. Jesus assured Martha at the tomb of Lazarus: “I am the Resurrection and the Life; whoever believes in Me will live even though they die” (Jn 11:25-26). Christ will raise us up on the last day, but it is also true, in a sense, that we have already risen with Christ. By virtue of the Holy Spirit, our Christian life is already a participation in the death and Resurrection of Christ (CCC #1002, #1003).

3) Easter is a feast which gives us hope and encouragement in this world of pain, sorrows, and tears. Easter reminds us that life is worth living. It is our belief in the Real Presence of the Risen Jesus — in our souls, in His Church, in the Blessed Sacrament, and in Heaven — that gives meaning to our personal as well as to our common prayers. Our trust in the all-pervading presence of the Risen Lord gives us strength to fight against temptations and freedom from unnecessary worries and fears. The prayer of St. Patrick,

the Apostle of Ireland, reads: “Christ before me, Christ beside me, Christ within me, never to part.”

1) We are to be Resurrection people: Easter, the feast of the Resurrection, gives us the joyful message that we are a “Resurrection people.” This means that we are not supposed to lie buried in the tomb of our sins, evil habits, and dangerous addictions. It gives us the Good News that no tombs can hold us down any longer – not the tombs of despair, discouragement, doubt, or death itself. Instead, we are expected to live a joyful and peaceful life, constantly experiencing the real Presence of the Risen Lord in all the events of our lives. “This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad” (Ps 118:24).

2) We need to seek our peace and joy in the Risen Jesus: The living presence of the Risen Lord gives us lasting peace and celestial joy in the face of the boredom, suffering, pain, and tensions of our day-to-day life. “Peace be with you!” (Jn 20:19), was Jesus’ salutation to his disciples at all post-Resurrection appearances. For the true Christian, every day must be an Easter Day, lived joyfully in the close company of the Risen Lord.

3) We need to live new, disciplined lives in the Risen Jesus: Our awareness of the all-pervading presence of the Risen Lord in and around us, and the strong conviction of our own coming resurrection, help us control our thoughts, desires, words, and behaviors. This salutary thought inspires us to honor our bodies, keeping them holy, pure, and free from evil habits and addictions. Our conviction about the presence of the Risen Lord in our neighbors, and in all those with whom we come in contact, should encourage us to respect them, and to render them loving, humble, selfless service.

4) Easter reminds us that every Good Friday in our lives will have an Easter Sunday. Each time we display our love of others, we share in the Resurrection. Each time we face a betrayal of trust and, with God’s grace, forgive the betrayer and forget the offense, we share in the Resurrection of Jesus. Each time we fail in our attempts to ward off temptations – but keep on trying to overcome them – we share in the Resurrection. Each time we continue to hope – even when our hope seems unanswered – we share in the power of Jesus’ Resurrection. In short, the message of Easter is that nothing can destroy us – not pain, sin, rejection, betrayal, or death. Because Christ has conquered all these, we, too, can conquer them — if we put our Faith and trust in Him.