

Synopsis: Easter Sunday (April 16) Homily (on John 20:1-9) L-17

Introduction: Significance of Easter: Easter is the greatest and the most important feast in the Church for three reasons: 1) **The Resurrection of Christ is the basis of our Christian Faith.** It is the greatest of the miracles, 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*” (I Cor 15: 14). “*Jesus is Lord, He is risen!*” (Rom 10:9), was the central theme of the *kerygma* (or 'preaching'), of the apostles, because Jesus had prophesied His Resurrection as a sign of His divinity: “*Tear down this temple and in three days I will build it again*” (Jn 2:19). The founder of no other religion has an empty tomb as Jesus has.

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 he dies*” (Jn 11:25-26). 3) **Easter is a feast which gives us hope and encouragement** in this world of pain, sorrows and tears. It 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 our communal prayer, strength to fight against temptations and freedom from unnecessary worries and fears.

Life Messages:1) Let us live the lives of Resurrection people: Easter 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, dangerous addictions, despair, discouragement, or doubts. Instead, we are expected to live a joyful and peaceful life, constantly experiencing the living presence of the Risen Lord in all the events of our lives and amid the boredom, suffering, pain and tensions of our day-to-day life.

2) **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 resurrection, helps to *control our thoughts, desires, words and behavior.* **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 into contact should encourage us to respect them, and to render them loving, humble and selfless service.

3) **We need to become transparent Christians:** We are called to be transparent Christians, showing others through our lives the love, mercy, compassion and spirit of self-sacrificing service of the Risen Jesus living in our hearts.

4) **We need to live lives of love in the power of Jesus' Resurrection:** Let us recall that, each time we try to practice Christian charity, mercy and forgiveness and each time we fight against temptations we share in the Resurrection of Jesus.

EASTER SUNDAY: ACTS 10:34a, 37-43; COL 3:1-4; JOHN 20: 1-9

Anecdote: # 1: The phoenix:The late Catholic Archbishop of Hartford, John Whealon, had undergone cancer surgery resulting in a permanent colostomy when he wrote these very personal words in one of his last Easter messages: "I am now a member of an association of people who have been wounded by cancer. That association has as its symbol the phoenix, a bird of Egyptian mythology. The Greek poet Hesiod, who lived eight centuries before Jesus was born, wrote about this legendary bird in his poetry. When the bird felt its death was near (every 500 to 1,461 years), it would fly off to Phoenicia, build a nest of aromatic wood and set itself on fire. When the bird was consumed by the flames, a new phoenix sprang forth from the ashes. Thus, the phoenix symbolizes immortality, resurrection, and life after death. It sums up the Easter message perfectly. Jesus gave up His life, and from the grave He was raised to life again on the third day. New life rises from the ashes of death. Today we are celebrating Christ's victory over the grave, the gift of eternal life for all who believe in Jesus. That is why the phoenix was one of the earliest symbols of the Risen Christ. The phoenix also symbolizes our daily rising to new life. Every day, like the phoenix, we rise from the ashes of sin and guilt and are refreshed and renewed by our living Lord and Savior with His forgiveness and the assurance that He still loves us and will continue to give us the strength we need." Archbishop John Whealon could have lived in a gloomy tomb of self-pity, hopeless defeat, and chronic sadness, but his faith in the Risen Lord opened his eyes to new visions of life.

2: Bright light in the "black holes" of life:Have you ever heard of a "black hole"? If you have ever watched movies or TV programs about travelling in outer space, like the TV series *Star Trek*, you will know what a black hole is. Roughly speaking, it is a spot in the vastness of space, which astronomers believe is like a giant vacuum or whirlpool sucking everything around it into the hole. Using Newton's laws, scientists first theorized black holes in the 1790s but it wasn't until 1994 that the Hubble Space Telescope discovered a massive supersized black hole – fortunately a long way from our own galaxy. There is also a black hole in our galaxy, the Milky Way. What if scientists said that it was not beyond the realms of possibility that one day our sun and everything around it would be sucked into this "black hole," and everything would be gone? "Black holes" are symbols of hopelessness, and the message of Easter tells us that there is something beyond those "black holes". Maybe this "black hole" includes grief for a loved one, anxiety over a work situation or what is happening in our family. Maybe it is a "black hole" of depression and stress, and we feel there is nothing we can do to change what is happening. Maybe it's the "black hole" of sickness and pain. Maybe it's the "black hole" of guilt and failure. Whether those "black holes" are right here and now or show up at some time in the future, Easter tells us there is hope, there is a living Saviour and Friend who will help us when we feel as if we have been sucked into the deepest darkness. Easter tells us that there is nothing to fear. We have a Risen Saviour who promises never to leave us, to love us always, always to brighten our darkest paths, and to guide us from death to eternal life in Heaven. Even when we are in the middle of something deep and dark, our Risen Saviour will always be there with us. *"I am the Living One! I was dead, but now I am alive forever and ever. I have authority over death and the world of the dead"* (Revelation 1:8).

<http://science.nationalgeographic.com/science/space/universe/black-holes-article/>

3: “He is not here.” Egyptian pyramids are world-famous as one of the “seven Wonders” of the ancient world. But they are actually gigantic tombs containing the mummified bodies of Egyptian Pharaohs. Westminster Abby is famous, and thousands visit it because the dead bodies of famous writers, philosophers and politicians are entombed there. But there is a Shrine of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem, and pilgrims from all over the world visit a tomb there which is empty with a note at its entrance which says, “He is not here.” It is famous because Jesus Christ Who was once buried there rose from the dead, leaving an empty tomb, as He had told his disciples he would. Thus, He worked the most important miracle in His life, defying the laws of nature and proving that He is God. We rejoice at this great and unique event by celebrating Easter. (Fr. J P)

Introduction:Significance of 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. The Resurrection is the greatest of the miracles -- 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). 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. There is a story of two women who stood before Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris. One asked, "Why can't we build structures like this anymore?" Her friend answered, "The people who built this had Faith. Today we have only opinions. And you can't build a cathedral with opinions."

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 he dies”* (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 (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, #1002, #1003).

3) Easter is a feast which gives us hope and encouragement in this world of pain, sorrows and tears. It 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.”

4) Reasons why we believe in the Resurrection of Jesus; (a) **Jesus himself testified to his Resurrection from the dead ([Mark 8:31](#); [Matthew 17:22](#); [Luke 9:22](#)). (b) **The tomb was empty on Easter Sunday** ([Luke 24:3](#)). Although the guards claimed ([Matthew 28:13](#)) that the disciples of Jesus had stolen the body, every sensible Jew knew that it was impossible for the terrified disciples of Jesus to steal the body of Jesus from a tomb guarded by a 16 member team of armed Roman soldiers. (c) The initial disbelief of Jesus' own disciples in his Resurrection, in spite of his repeated apparitions. This serves as a strong proof of his Resurrection. It explains why the apostles started preaching the resurrected Christ only after receiving the anointing of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. (d) The transformation of Jesus' disciples:**The disciples of Jesus were almost immediately transformed from men who were hopeless and fearful after the crucifixion** ([Luke 24:21](#), [John 20:19](#)) **into men who were confident and bold witnesses of the Resurrection** ([Acts 2:24](#), [3:15](#), [4:2](#)). (e) The Jews and the Romans could not disprove Jesus' Resurrection by presenting the dead body of Jesus. (f) The apostles and early Christians would not have faced martyrdom if they were not absolutely sure of Jesus' Resurrection. (g) **The Apostle Paul's conversion from a persecutor of Christians into a zealous apostle, preaching the Good News of Jesus throughout much of the Gentile world supports the truth of Jesus' Resurrection** ([Galatians 1:11-17](#), [Acts 9:1](#), [Acts 9:24-25](#), [Acts 26:15-18](#)). (h) **The sheer existence of a thriving, empire-conquering early Christian Church, bravely facing three centuries of persecution, supports the truth of the Resurrection claim.** (i) **The New Testament witnesses do not bear the stamp of dupes or deceivers. The apostles and the early Christians were absolutely sure about the Resurrection of Jesus.****

Exegesis: The Resurrection of Jesus had certain special features. **First**, Jesus prophesied it as a sign of His Divinity: *"Tear down this temple and in three days I will build it again"* (Jn 2:19). **Second**, the founder of no other religion has an empty tomb as Jesus has. We see the fulfillment of Christ's promise on the empty cross and in the empty tomb. The angel said to the women at Jesus' tomb: *"Why are you looking among the dead for One Who is alive? He is not here: He has been raised"* (Luke 24:5-6). The third special feature is the initial disbelief of Jesus' own disciples in his Resurrection, in spite of his repeated apparitions. This serves as a strong proof of his Resurrection. It explains why the apostles started preaching the Risen Christ only after receiving the anointing of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. Proclamation and witness-bearing are the main themes of today's readings. In the first reading, St. Peter shares his own experience of Christ's Resurrection and its joy with the newly baptized members of Cornelius' family. In the second reading, St. Paul bears witness to his experience of the risen Lord on the Damascus Road, which converted him from a persecuting Pharisee into a zealous apostle of Jesus. Today's Gospel explains the empty-tomb Resurrection experience of Mary Magdalene, Peter and John. Mary Magdalene proclaims her personal experience: *"I have seen the Lord."*

Life messages: 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 tomb can hold us down anymore - not the tomb 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"***(Psalm 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*” 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 are to be transparent Christians:We are called to be transparent Christians, showing others, through our lives of love, mercy, compassion and self-sacrificing service, that the Risen Jesus is living in our hearts.

4)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 behavior*. **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 into contact, should encourage us to respect them and to render them loving, humble and selfless service.

5) We need to remember Easter in our Good Fridays: Easter reminds us that every Good Friday in our lives will have an Easter Sunday, and that Jesus will let us share the power of his Resurrection. 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, 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, and we, too, can conquer them if we put our Faith and trust in Him.

6) We are to be bearers of the Good News of Resurrection power.Resurrection is Good News, but at the same time, it’s sometimes painful because it involves death. Before the power of the Resurrection can take hold in our own lives, we’re called to die to sin, to die to self. We may even have to die to our own dreams, so that God can do what He wants to do with our lives. Resurrection is about seeing our world in a new way. Early that Easter morning, Mary did not find what she was looking for, the dead body of Jesus. But she found something better than she could have imagined: the Risen Jesus. Sometimes, the things we think we want most are not granted to us. What we get instead is an experience of God’s new ways of working in the world. That’s the power of the Resurrection. When those moments come, we must spread the news--just as Mary did: *We have seen the Lord!*

JOKE OF THE WEEK

1) "TA-DA!"A Sunday school teacher had just finished telling her third graders about how Jesus was crucified and placed in a tomb with a great stone sealing the opening. Then, wanting to share the excitement of the Resurrection, she asked: "And what do you think were Jesus’ first words when He came bursting out of that tomb alive?" A hand shot up into the air from the rear of the

classroom. Attached to it was the arm of a little girl. Leaping out of her chair she shouted out excitedly "I know, I know!" "Good" said the teacher, "Tell us, what were Jesus first words?" And extending her arms high into the air she said: "TA-DA!"

2) Mother-in-law in Jerusalem: George went on a vacation to the Middle East with most of his family including his mother-in-law. During their vacation and while they were visiting Jerusalem, George's mother-in-law died. With the death certificate in hand, George went to the American Consulate to make arrangements to send the body back to the States for proper burial. The Consul, after hearing of the death of the mother-in-law, told George that the sending of a body back to the States for burial is very, very expensive. It could cost as much as \$5,000. The Consul continued, "In most cases the person responsible for the remains normally decides to bury the body here. This would only cost \$150." George thought for some time and answered, "I don't care how much it will cost to send the body back; that's what I want to do." The Consul, after hearing this, said, "You must have loved your mother-in-law very much, considering the difference in price." "No, it's not that!" said George. "You see, I know of a case many years ago of a person, by name Jesus, who was buried here in Jerusalem. On the third day he arose from the dead. I just can't take that chance."

3) See what happens. One lady wrote in to a question and answer forum. "Dear Sirs, Our preacher said on Easter, that Jesus just swooned on the cross and that the disciples nursed Him back to health. What do you think? Sincerely, Bewildered." Dear Bewildered, Beat your preacher with a cat-of-nine-tails, nail him to a cross; hang him in the sun for 6 hours; run a spear through his side...put him in an airless tomb for 36 hours and see what happens." Sincerely, Charles.

3) Rented for a weekend: Joseph of Arimathaea was a very wealthy Pharisee, a member of the Council, and a secret follower of Jesus. It was Joseph who went to Pilate and asked for Jesus' body after the crucifixion. And it was Joseph who supplied the tomb for Jesus' burial. I wonder if someone pulled him aside and said, "Joseph that was such beautiful, costly, hand-hewn tomb. Why on earth did you give it to someone to be buried in?" "Why not?" Joseph may have answered. He only needed it for the weekend."

4) Resurrection in election: Presidential candidate Mike Huckabee was once asked if he believed in the Resurrection. "Of course, I do," said Huckabee. "Dead people vote in every election we have in Arkansas. Resurrection is very real to us."

Easter links: 1) <http://re-xs.ucsm.ac.uk/re/religion/christianity/easter.html>

2) <http://textweek.com/yearc/easterdc.htm>

3) Easter video: <http://www.history.com/topics/holidays/history-of-easter/videos/history-of-the-holidays-easter-video>

<http://www.catholic.org/lent/easter.php>

22- Additional anecdotes:

1) "[The Godfather of Fitness](#)." You may recall years ago when fitness legend Jack LaLanne celebrated his seventieth birthday by towing 70 boats containing 70 people for a mile across Long Beach Harbor. Amazing! But wait. He did it by holding the rope in his teeth. Why? Well, he was handcuffed and wearing leg shackles! Unbelievable! LaLanne was still going strong in his nineties. But friends, this "[The Godfather of Fitness](#)" died on Jan 24, 2011, proving that this world is not our final destination. It is but a prelude to a grander production. This world is a preparatory school. Without the Resurrection, it is simply impossible to explain a world in which people suffer and die. But the Resurrection is real. Christ rose from the dead. Christ is still alive and He is available in our world today

2) The greatest comeback in history: In its November 12, 2001 issue, *Sports Illustrated* ranked the 10 greatest comebacks in world history. Among those making the list, the following names are to be specially noted.

1. Michael Jordan, 1995. Quits basketball to make his first triumphant comeback.

5. Muhammad Ali, 1974. Seven years after being stripped of his title and his boxing license, defeats George Foreman in Zaire to win back the belt.

8. Japan and Germany, 1950s. They were the former Axis Powers which rose from the ashes of World War II to become industrial superpowers.

10. Jesus Christ, 33 A.D. Defies Jewish critics and stuns the Romans with his Resurrection. It was the greatest comeback of all time. And He's been specializing in comebacks ever since.

3) "We believe you." There is a beautiful story told recently about a woman named Rosemary who works in the Alzheimer's Unit of a nursing home. Rosemary and a colleague named Arlene brought the residents of the home together one Good Friday afternoon to view Franco Zeffirelli's acclaimed production, *Jesus of Nazareth*. They wondered whether these elderly Alzheimer's patients would even know what was going on, but they thought it might be worth the effort. When they finally succeeded in getting everyone into position, they started the video. Rosemary was pleasantly surprised at the quiet attention being paid to the screen. At last came the scene where Mary Magdalene comes upon the empty tomb and sees that Jesus' body is not there. An unknown man, in reality the Risen Christ, asks Mary why she is looking for the living among the dead. Mary runs as fast as she can back to the disciples and tells Peter and the rest with breathless excitement, "He's alive! I saw Him, I tell you! He's alive." The doubt in their eyes causes Mary to pull back. "You don't believe me . . . You don't believe me!" From somewhere in the crowd of Alzheimer's patients came the clear, resolute voice of Esther, one of the patients. "WE BELIEVE YOU," she said, "WE BELIEVE YOU!" [Rosemary Kadrmas in Jeff Cavins, et.al, *Amazing Grace for the Catholic Heart* (West Chester, PA: Ascension Press, LLC, 2003), pp. 211-212.]

4) The killers asked her if there was anyone [in the classroom] who had faith in Christ. A day after the terrible tragedy at Columbine High, CNN journalist Larry King did a live interview with

a teenage girl named Mickie Cain, a student who had witnessed the massacre. Mickie was having a difficult time maintaining her composure and was able to blurt out only a few words before lapsing into uncontrollable sobs. Larry King was patient and gave her plenty of time to regain her composure. Mickie recounted the chilling story: "Let me tell you about my friend Cassie," she said. "[Cassie] was amazing . . . She completely stood up for God when the killers asked her if there was anyone [in the classroom] who had faith in Christ. She spoke up [and said she did] and they shot her for it." [Franklin Graham, *The Name* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 2002), pp. 14-15]. Such a testimony as Cassie made that day makes our witness look pretty pathetic, doesn't it? The critical question is, would you make such a sacrifice for something that you knew was patently untrue? Of course not. And neither would those early disciples of Christ. They had met Christ, Risen from the grave, and they would not testify otherwise, even while being tortured. The witnesses are so credible, the change in their lives so dramatic, that their testimony cannot be disregarded.

5) Cape of Good Hope: You may remember a geography lesson from elementary school in which you learned that the southernmost point of Africa is a point which for centuries has experienced tremendous storms. For many years no one knew what lay beyond that cape, for no ship attempting to round that point had ever returned to tell the tale. Among the ancients it was known as the "Cape of Storms," and for good reason. But then a Portuguese explorer in the sixteenth century, Vasco De Gama, successfully sailed East around that very point and found beyond the wild raging storms, a great calm sea, and beyond that, the shores of India. The name of that cape was changed from the Cape of Storms to the Cape of Good Hope. Until Jesus Christ rose from the dead, death had been the "cape of storms" on which all hopes of life beyond had been wrecked. No one knew what lay beyond that point until, on Easter morning, Jesus arose. The ancient visions of Isaiah became the victory of Jesus over our last great enemy. Like those sixteenth century explorers, we can see beyond human death to the hope of Heaven and eternal life with the Father. More than that, we dare to believe that we shall experience in our own human lives exactly what the Son of God experienced in His, for the Risen Christ says to us, "Because I live, you shall live also." This is the heart of our Faith.

6) "I choose death....by old age." Long ago, there was an exceedingly clever court jester at the court of the Caliph of Baghdad. For years he'd never failed to amuse the court whenever they called him. But one day, in a split second of carelessness, he offended the caliph who ordered him put to death. "However," said the caliph, "in consideration of your many years of fine and faithful service, I'll let you choose how you wish to die." "Oh mighty Caliph," replied the jester. "I thank you for your great kindness. I choose death....by old age." Wouldn't we all! But that just delays the big question: Then what? What comes after you finally die at the age of 110 on the tennis court? Only Jesus has the answer. He says, "*I am the Resurrection and the Life. Whoever believes in Me, even though he die, will live with Me forever.*" (Msgr. D. Clarke)

7) He always whistled: Have you heard the story of the man whose hobby was growing roses? When he worked in his rose garden, he always whistled. It seemed to everyone that he was whistling much louder than was needed for his own enjoyment. One day a neighbor asked him why it was that he always whistled so loudly. The man then took the neighbor into his home to meet his wife. The woman was not only an invalid, but was completely blind as well. The man, you see, was whistling, not for his benefit, but rather for the benefit of his wife. He wanted his

blind wife to know that he was nearby, and that she was not alone. That story is a wonderful illustration of the significance of Easter Day. The affirmation, "Christ is risen!" reminds us that God is near, and the experiencing of His presence strengthens us in our weakness. (*Living the Easter Faith*, Donald William Dotterer).

8) And so the Iron Lady wept. Several years ago, when Margaret Thatcher was Prime Minister of Britain, a terrorist's bomb exploded in the conference room where many of the government meetings were held. Margaret Thatcher survived this blast, but some of her cabinet members were killed. The following Sunday, Margaret Thatcher went to church as she always did. But that particular Sunday seemed different. As Margaret Thatcher sang the hymns, listened to the message, saw the candles upon the altar and the sunshine streaming through the stained-glass windows, she began to weep. She wept because everything around her had been changed by the loss of her friends. The familiar had now become strange. The goodness and beauty of the world around her seemed almost too much to bear. She knew she would not only miss her friends, but also the wonderful times they had had together. And so the Iron Lady wept. If we can relate to Maggie Thatcher's grief, maybe we can relate to the grief of Jesus' disciples and friends on that first Easter morning.

9) "I want to see your Resurrection!" Father Basil Pennington, a Catholic monk, tells of an encounter he once had with a teacher of Zen. Pennington was at a retreat. As part of the retreat, each person met privately with this Zen teacher. Pennington says that at his meeting the Zen teacher sat there before him smiling from ear to ear and rocking gleefully back and forth. Finally the teacher said: "I like Christianity. But I would not like Christianity without the Resurrection. I want to see your Resurrection!" Pennington notes that, "With his directness, the teacher was saying what everyone else implicitly says to Christians: You are a Christian. You are risen with Christ. Show me (what this means for you in your life) and I will believe."
[<http://www.stjohnslaverne.org/SermonReadingArchive/OmernickEasterSundaySermon2006.rtf>] Marilyn Omernick.] That is how people know if the Resurrection is true or not. Does it affect how we live?

10) "Do you mean like Elvis?" A father was explaining to his five-year-old son how Jesus died and then, on the third day, rose from the dead. "That's what we believe," the father said. "That's how we know Jesus is the Son of God, because He came back from the dead just as He said He would." "Do you mean like Elvis?" the boy replied. Well, no. Not exactly like Elvis. This is a new world. People nowadays believe just about everything, except that which is most true. We have to work a little bit harder in this new world to help people

11) From the empty tomb: It was a hot summer afternoon. The famous Hollywood film director Cecil B. DeMille was drifting in a canoe on a lake in Maine, reading a book. He looked away from the book momentarily, down to the lake. There a bunch of water beetles were at play. Suddenly one of the beetles began to crawl up the side of the canoe. When it got halfway up, it attached the talons of its legs to the wooden side of the canoe and died. DeMille watched for a minute; then he turned back to his book. About three hours later, DeMille looked down at the dead beetle again. What he saw amazed him. The beetle had dried up, and its back was starting to crack open. As he watched, something began to emerge from the opening: first a moist head, then wings. It was a beautiful dragonfly. DeMille sat there in awe. Then the dragonfly began to

move its wings. It hovered gracefully over the water where the other beetles were at play. But they didn't recognize the dragonfly. They didn't realize that it was the same beetle they had played with three hours earlier. DeMille took his finger and nudged the dried-out shell of the beetle. It was like an empty tomb (**Mark Link in *Sunday Homilies***)

12) Easter: surprising or amazing? There is an old story about Noah Webster, who wrote the famous dictionary that bears his name. As you can imagine, he was a stickler for the precise use of language. He was also something of a womanizer. One day he was in the pantry kissing the maid when Mrs. Webster walked in on them. Mrs. Webster said, "Why, Noah, I'm surprised." Noah said, "No, my dear. We're surprised. You're amazed." [Mark Trotter, "Do You Amaze Anybody?" (May 22, 1988).] I think the story is apocryphal. I'm sure Mr. Webster was a stickler for the right word, but when you look in his own *Webster's Dictionary* he says surprise is a synonym for amaze. Amaze is the stronger word. Easter is both surprising and amazing. Here is God's ultimate act of love and power. It is an act of love that has gone to its limit in Jesus' gift of Himself on the cross. It is an act of power that burst the tomb, and announced to the world that Love is stronger than hate, Good prevails over evil, and Life is triumphant over death.

13) "Suppose he isn't in there!" Two famous Broadway producers were pallbearers at the funeral of the great escape artist, Harry Houdini. As they lifted the beautiful and heavy casket to their shoulders, one of them turned and whispered to the other, "Suppose he isn't in there!" He was, of course. Only one man in human history has conquered the grave, and it is He Whom we call Lord. "Christ has been raised from the dead," writes St. Paul, "the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep" (I Corinthians 15:20). What deliriously Good News that is! No wonder our Church is full on Easter Sunday. That is news that turns the world upside down. Jesus Christ is risen!

14) Resurrection Bay: In the movie *The Hunt for Red October*, the opening scene was filmed in Resurrection Bay, Alaska. This dramatic setting received its name in 1792 when the Russian trader and explorer Alexandr Baranov was forced to find refuge there during a vicious storm on Easter Sunday. Resurrection Bay has the distinction of remaining ice-free even in the dead of winter. Even in squalls and storms, it provides safe harbor. As Christians, we anchor our souls in Resurrection Bay. The world may be caught in a thousand tempests, and storms may arise from all directions. But the empty tomb assures us of tranquility and a passageway to Heaven that will never ice over. Jesus died and rose again to give us peace *with* God and the peace *of* God -- life both eternal and abundant. We anchor our souls in the haven of rest. (*Turning Point*)

15) Many infallible proofs: Albert L. Roper was a prominent Virginia attorney, a graduate of the University of Virginia and its law school, who eventually became mayor of the city of Norfolk. He once began a thorough legal investigation into the evidence for the Resurrection of Christ, asking himself the question: "Can any intelligent person accept the Resurrection story?" After examining the evidence at length, he came away asking a different question: "Can any intelligent person deny the weight of this evidence?" Even those who traveled for three years with Jesus experienced disbelief over His Resurrection, but Jesus showed Himself alive by many infallible

proofs. We don't base our Faith on legends, myths, or fairy tales. The Resurrection of Jesus Christ is well-documented, and many critics have been silenced (and even converted) when they've carefully investigated the evidence [Albert L. Roper, *Did Jesus Rise From the Dead* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1965), foreword.] We have a Risen Savior! He offers Himself to us today with many infallible proofs. (Turning Point- 3/29/13)

16) Joke Saturday: According to an ancient Russian Orthodox tradition, the day before Easter was devoted to telling jokes. Priests would join the people in telling their best jokes to one another (presumably "clean" jokes!!) The reason was to reflect the joke God pulled on the devil in the Resurrection. Satan thought he won on Friday, but God had the last laugh on Easter Sunday.

17) "He is risen indeed!": You probably do not remember the name Nikolai Ivanovich Bukharin. Many years ago he was one of the most powerful men on earth. A Russian Communist leader, he took part in the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917. He was the editor of the Soviet newspaper *Pravda* and was a full member of the Politburo. His works on economics and political science are still read today. There is a story told about a journey he took from Moscow to Kiev in 1930 to address a huge assembly of Communists. The subject was atheism. Addressing the crowd, he attacked Christianity, hurling insults and arguments against it. When he had finished, he looked out at the audience. "Are there any questions?" he demanded. Deafening silence filled the auditorium, but then one man approached the platform and mounted the lectern. After surveying the crowd, he shouted the ancient greeting of the Russian Orthodox Church: "CHRIST IS RISEN!" The crowd stood up and shouted in a thundering voice: "HE IS RISEN INDEED!" Amazed and dejected, Bukharin left the stage in silence. Perhaps he had learned the lesson that Faith in Christ's Resurrection was deeply rooted in his Russian Orthodox Communist followers!

18) He is no longer in the grave: In 1887, twenty-two years after the assassination of President Abraham Lincoln, his coffin was dug up and opened because there were constant rumors that his body was not in the grave. So they dug it up and the body was there. The rumors continued so 14 years later they had to dig it up again. Both times witnesses were present who testified that Lincoln was still in the grave. Three days after the death of Jesus Christ, similar rumors began to spread throughout the land of Israel. Only this time there were no witnesses who could say that they had seen His body. In fact, to the contrary, many witnesses claimed to have seen him out of His grave and even talked with Him after the Resurrection. As great a man as Lincoln was, there were witnesses to prove he was still in the grave. If one of our Presidents or another leader in our government were to cry out today to Lincoln for help, there would be no response. If a scientist were to cry out to Einstein for help today there would only be empty silence. If someone were to call out to Mohammed or Buddha or Gandhi today there would be no help. But if you and I call out to Jesus Christ there is instant power available to us... power to change lives ...why? Because He lives! (Rev. David Henderson).

19) The parable of the butterfly: As a butterfly soared overhead, one caterpillar said to the other, "You'll never get me up in one of those things!" Yet for every caterpillar the time comes when the urge to eat and grow subsides and he instinctively begins to form a chrysalis around himself. The chrysalis hardens and you'd think for all the world that the caterpillar was dead. But one

spring morning the life inside the chrysalis will begin to writhe, the top will crack open, and a beautifully-formed butterfly will emerge. For hours it will stand stretching and drying its wings, moving them slowly up and down, up and down. And then, before you know it, the butterfly will glide aloft, effortlessly riding the currents of the air, alighting on flower after gorgeous flower, as if to show off its vivid colors to the bright blossoms. Somehow, the miracle of the butterfly never loses its fascination for us. Perhaps that is because the butterfly is a living parable of the promise of Resurrection. On Easter morning, the disciples saw Jesus' grave-clothes on the cold slab empty, but still lying in the wrapped folds that had gone round and round the corpse. Only the corpse was gone, much like an empty chrysalis deserted by a butterfly which has left it to soar free. "He is risen as He said," an angel told the incredulous disciples.

20) "Which one would you ask which way to go?" Dr. Seamands tells of a Muslim who became a Christian in Africa. "Some of his friends asked him, 'Why have you become a Christian?' He answered, 'Well, it's like this. Suppose you were going down the road and suddenly the road forked in two directions, and you didn't know which way to go, and there at the fork in the road were two men, one dead and one alive--which one would you ask which way to go?'"

21) A real Easter egg: A small chick begins the long journey to birth. The not-yet-a-bird weighs little more than air; its beak and claws are barely pin pricks. The bird-to-be is in its own little world: protected by the rigid shell, warmed by the mother hen's body, nourished by the nutrients within the egg's membrane. But then the chick begins the work of life. Over several days the chick keeps picking and picking until it can break out from its narrow world — and into an incomparably wider one. But for this to happen, the egg has to go to pieces. New life demands shattering the old. That is the real Easter egg. Not a complete egg dyed and painted with so many designs and colors. Not an egg that has been hardboiled, impossible to shatter. Not an egg made of chocolate. The real Easter egg is shattered and destroyed. The real Easter egg exists in broken pieces. The real Easter egg is cracked and opened, yielding new life that has moved out to live in the open. For centuries, the world has marked the Resurrection of the Lord with eggs. But the Easter meaning of the egg is found in the struggle of the chick to free itself from its confines so as to move into much bigger world beyond it. We struggle to break out of a world that we perceive is going to pieces; we pick away at an existence that leaves us dissatisfied and unfulfilled. The promise of the Easter Christ is that we can break out of our self-contained little worlds and move into a world where peace and justice reign, a world illuminated by hope and warmed by love, a world that extends beyond time and place into the forever of God's dwelling place. [From a meditation by Brother David Steindl-Rast, O.S.B.].

22) Yes, There Is Hope (Rev. Bill Self): In the early part of World War II, a Navy submarine was stuck on the bottom of the harbor in New York City. It seemed that all was lost. There was no electricity and the oxygen was quickly running out. In one last attempt to rescue the sailors from the steel coffin, the U.S. Navy sent a ship equipped with Navy divers to the spot on the surface, directly above the wounded submarine. A Navy diver went over the side of the ship to the dangerous depths in one last rescue attempt. The trapped sailors heard the metal boots of the diver land on the exterior surface, and they moved to where they thought the rescuer would be. In the darkness they tapped in Morse code, "Is there any hope?" The diver on the outside,

recognizing the message, signaled by tapping on the exterior of the sub, "Yes, there is hope." This is the picture of our dilemma as we worship this glad Easter Day. Humankind is trapped in a dreadful situation. All around we are running low on hope, and we look for a word from beyond offering it to us. This world in which we live is plagued with war and famine, mounting debt and continual destruction. The more we try to rescue ourselves the more we seem to fall behind. We wonder.L/17

Scriptural Homilies”Cycle A(No. 23)by Fr. Tony:akadavil@gmail.com

Fr. Anthony. Kadavil,St. John the Baptist Church, P. O. Box 417, Grand Bay, AL 36541

Visit our website:<http://stjohngrandbay.org/>for previous Cycle A & C homilies, **56Year of Faith** “**Adult Faith Formation Lessons**” (useful for RCIA classes too) & 188 “**Question of the Week.**” Contact me using my IDakadavil@gmail.com. For the Vatican version of this homilycopy & paste on Google Search [>> http://en.radiovaticana.va >>](http://en.radiovaticana.va) Features >> Asia Liturgical Reflectionsand click Enter button.Fr. Anthony. Kadavil,St. John the Baptist Church, P. O. Box 417, Grand Bay,Al, 36541