

## Easter Sunday

Three men died and are at the pearly gates of heaven. St. Peter tells them that they can enter the gates if they can answer one simple question. St. Peter asks the first man, "What is Easter?" He replies, "Oh, that's easy! It's the holiday in November when everyone gets together, eats turkey, and are thankful..." St. Peter shakes his head, and proceeds to ask the second man the same question, "What is Easter?" The second one replies, "Easter is the holiday in December when we put up a nice tree, exchange presents and celebrate the birth of Jesus." St. Peter looks at the second man, again shakes his head in disgust, and then peers over his glasses at the third man and asks, "What is Easter?" The third man smiles confidently and looks St. Peter in the eyes, "I know what Easter is. Easter is the Christian holiday that coincides with the Jewish celebration of Passover. Jesus was crucified on a cross and then buried in a nearby cave which was sealed off by a large boulder." St. Peter smiles broadly with delight. Then the man continues, "Every year the boulder is moved aside so that Jesus can come out...and, if he sees his shadow, there will be six more weeks of winter."

Easter is a celebration of joy and glory. It is an outspoken and truthful event of Jesus' glory. It is a continuation of a dead silence to a voice of resurrection and glory. It is spring. Every aspect of nature brings a change, new hope and new life. Frozen weather becomes spring weather. The trees are blossoming.

Easter is a celebration that brings hope and personal witnesses. Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! What a joy it is to gather today, on this most glorious feast, to celebrate the heart of our faith: the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. The tomb is empty. Death has been defeated. Hope has a name — and it is Jesus. But let's ask something simple yet profound today: Why does Easter matter to us — right here, right now? The answer is: because we are called to be witnesses.

Just as Mary Magdalene ran from the empty tomb to tell the disciples, just as Peter and John rushed to see for themselves, just as the early Church proclaimed, even under persecution, we, too, are witnesses of the Resurrection. Not in the same way as those first disciples — we did not see the stone rolled away or speak with the risen Jesus face-to-face. But our lives, transformed by His grace, become the living evidence that Jesus is alive.

Jesus told the disciples, "They will know you are my followers by your love."

In a world starving for compassion, aching with division, a Christian who loves radically, inclusively, selflessly is a witness that Christ is alive and working through us.

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Dear friends, Easter is not the end of the story.

It is the beginning of the Church's mission.

The angel said: "He is not here; He has risen. Go and tell the others."

So let us go — not just today, but every day —

as people who have seen the Risen Lord with the eyes of faith,

as people who are not just admirers of Jesus, but witnesses.