

EASTER SUNDAY OF THE RESURRECTION OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST
THEME: "THE LORD IS TRULY RISEN, ALLELUIA..."

"The Lord is truly risen, alleluia" is part of the entrance antiphon on this Easter Sunday of the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. St Paul tells us: "If Christ has not been raised your faith is futile and you are still in your sins"- 1 Cor 15:17. Thanks be to God for truly raising his Son, Jesus Christ, to eternal life and giving us hope that one day he will raise our mortal bodies to eternal life also.

For us Christians, especially Roman Catholics, Easter is the greatest feast of all feasts. The Catechism of the Catholic Church explains it better: "Therefore Easter is not simply one feast among others, but the 'feast of feasts, 'Solemnity of solemnities,' just as the Eucharist is the "Sacrament of sacraments" (#1169.p303). St. Athanasius, the Great calls Easter "the Great Sunday."

On this Easter Sunday, the first reading from the Acts of the Apostles presents us with a summary of the life and the person of Jesus. In Peter's speech, Luke, the author of Acts of the Apostles, gives us the main message of the early Church: Jesus' rejection ("They put him to death"), God's vindication ("God raised him"), and the apostles' witness to the Christ-event ("He commanded them to preach"). The background of Peter's speech was his address to Cornelius and his household. Cornelius was a centurion of the Roman army stationed in Caesarea. Peter's experience with Cornelius and his family taught him the fundamental truths about what Jesus taught them, namely: God has no favorite but loves and cares for all humanity. Peter also learned God welcomes whoever does what is right, no matter his/her origin. Lastly, that God's salvation is for all people. This basic truth is what Peter and the early Christians preached during their post-resurrection ministry. The apostles of Jesus preached and died for this Gospel truth. Now, it is our time also continue to preach this fundamental truth of Christ to the whole world.

St. John tells us in today's Gospel that Mary of Magdala comes to the tomb early in the morning on the first day of the week while it is still dark and finds the tomb empty. All four Gospels name her as one of the first eyewitnesses of Jesus' resurrection. She is the first to announce that Jesus has been raised from the dead. In today's Gospel reading, we're told, she reported to Peter and other disciples whom Jesus loved: "They have taken the Lord from the tomb, and we don't know where they put him." It is interesting to know that grave looters were common in those days, so she had good reason to speculate that perhaps grave looters took his body away. Peter and the other disciple, whose name was not mentioned, went and found just as she told them. But the other disciple saw and believed. That is to say, he believed that Jesus is truly risen.

St. John tells us "For they did not yet understand the Scripture that he had to rise from the dead." Many Scripture scholars explain this text to mean the disciples were slow in recognizing the resurrection since the Holy Spirit had not yet come to enlighten them. Their experience reminds us that we must always ask the assistance of the Holy Spirit to understand Scripture so that we may faithfully carry out Jesus' mission he has entrusted to us.

St. Paul reminds us of the effects of our baptism. Baptism makes us children of God. Through baptism, we die to our sinful and egotistic self so that we are raised to a new life with Christ. This is possible if we "think of what is above, not what is on earth." That is to say we must be concerned with heavenly things and not be concerned with earthly things. Since we are 'heaven-bound people,' it makes sense to focus on heavenly things, our final home, and not be so much concerned with earthly things that are temporal.

Easter reminds us Jesus is truly risen, and that one day, he will raise our mortal bodies to himself. We profess this mystery of our faith that Christ has died, Christ is risen, and Christ will come again daily at the celebration of the Holy Mass. May this profession of the mystery of our Catholic faith also remind to "think of what is above, not of what is on earth."

Wishing each and every one a happy and blessed Easter.
The Lord is truly risen, alleluia!