

Easter 2018

Happy Easter! We are the Easter people and hallelujah is our song." - St. Pope John Paul II
It's been an incredible and fruitful Holy Triduum already with the washing of the feet of our local Protestant pastors and community service directors and RCIA and Confirmation candidates, families reverencing the cross on Good Friday and the long but soul stirring Easter vigil last night. Some of us may feel a little exhausted by joy over these past days of Holy Liturgies but Gods joy can never be exhausted.

Pope Francis - Joy of the Gospel-

"Goodness always tends to spread," and "any person who has experienced a profound liberation becomes more sensitive to the needs of others. That's what we call here at SJN becoming a missionary disciple. Building, Bridging, and Being a Disciple. Whether your encounter with Christ takes you to far off places or makes you more present to your marriage and family in the home. The joy of the Gospel drives us to a spiritual freedom that compels us to share the joy of Jesus with others.

Like the email I received from a man who had been attending mass here at SJN faithfully with his family for the past 20 years and then decided this was the year to come into full communion with the Lords Church as a Catholic. With his permission to share; he said,

Father Rex,

First I would like to humbly thank you for allowing me to participate in a very wonderful annual ceremony of the washing of the feet. I would also like to tell you how much more rich and wonderful this Lenten season has been for me. For 20 years I have watched my family go through this Holy week with great admiration, But I never realized the how, why, and what it was all about.

As a lifelong Christian I understood only Christmas, Palm Sunday, Good Friday and Easter Sunday. Now I realize all of the importance for each step and what it meant, what it means today and the hidden lessons found in re-creating and celebrating this season.

I had my first confession recently and it was nothing that I could have prepared for, while I rehearsed what I was going to say (to in order to be "brief, blunt and gone")

I found myself hearing words come out of my mouth about things I have long forgotten, things that shamed me and was pushed down deep...for anyone to question the spiritual freedom that is found inside the confessional is just ludicrous to me now. It was the single most powerful spiritual experience in my life rivaling my baptism from when I was very young.

I know that I wasn't spiritually ready to convert over these past 20 years until this time and that Our Lord has a purpose and his own time, but in retrospect, I wish I had converted 20 years ago. I have 2 days left until first communion and the anticipation is nearly overwhelming for me.

My RCIA process has been truly life changing and i look forward to being involved much more in our wonderful parish over the next few years. "

Notice that he said "our" parish. He's no longer on the outside looking in.

As G.K. Chesterton said, the Church is larger on the inside than it is on the outside.

Speaking of larger, the RCIA group has grown by two, Just since the Wednesday before Palm Sunday. Usually it takes about nine months of catechism classes to be prepared for the first sacraments, but these two additions decided they'd had enough catechism on the inside and decided they wanted to go ahead and join us on the outside. So we have baby Holden Oliver Lobue, born a week ago Wednesday, and baby Grayson Daniel Crossley born at 4:30am on Holy Thursday, Who will be joining us very shortly as soon as they let their parents get two consecutive hours of sleep. Life is our greatest gift and blessing.

For those of you who may be here for the first time we want to express our gratitude for your presence here with us on this most sacred Day of the year. You are most welcome. Especially for those who may not be Catholic but are here to support or pray for a family member who is becoming Catholic. We have an Easter gift for you in the Gathering area called the little white book, a six-minute reflection from the book of Acts for the entire 7 Week season of Easter. (On behalf of myself, and Fr. Kalivela, our Deacons Cliff and John and our Discipleship Leaders Bryan and Ann and their wonderful catechism team, and our support staff, thank you for being here)

We realize you won't understand fully the significance of everything that has taken place or is about to happen next, after we bring out the sacrificial goat, but seriously your being here is a great testimony of love for your friend or family member. If you are interested in learning more about this Church that Jesus started a couple of thousand years ago, please visit with one of us.

What happened then is what we celebrate tonight/today. The truth of the resurrection from the dead. **Anyone who's turns even slightly toward Christ will be hit by the light of truth. Mahatma Gandhi, the great Hindu liberator of India said that Jesus was "A man who was completely innocent, offered himself as a sacrifice for the good of others, including his enemies, and became the ransom of the world. It was a perfect act."** It was a perfect act of love. The reason we place the crucifix in our churches and homes and hospitals is to remind us that we are an Easter people.

Clarence W. Hall

"Easter says you can put truth in a grave, but it won't stay there." You can nail it to a cross, wrap it in winding sheets and shut it up in a tomb, but it will rise. "

Bishop Robert Baron-

If Jesus didn't rise from the dead, all bishops, priests, and Christian ministers should go home and get honest jobs, and all the Christian faithful should leave their churches immediately.

As Paul himself put it: "If Jesus is not raised from the dead, our preaching is in vain and we are the most pitiable of men."

It's no good, of course, trying to explain the Resurrection away or rationalize it as a myth, a symbol, or an inner subjective experience.

It comes down finally to this: if Jesus was not raised from death, Christianity is a fraud and a joke. But if he did rise from death, then Christianity is the fullness of God's revelation, and Jesus must be the absolute center of our lives. There is no third option.

And so we believe. I believe, that all of this is true and real.

That Jesus loves me enough to die for me.

"God loves each of us as if there were only one of us." - St. Augustine

And so I want you to experience that. We want you to believe, that the God who created you without you will not save you without. But He won't do it without your permission.

Archbishop Fulton Sheen -

Because Christ is born in a cave, all who wish to see Him must stoop, and the stoop is the mark of humility. The proud refuse to stoop. Therefore, they miss divinity. Those however, who are willing to risk bending their egos to go into that cave, find that they are not in a cave at all; but they are in a universe where sits a babe on His mother's lap, who made the world.

That's why hallelujah is our song and that is why we are an Easter people!