



Easter Message 2019

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He is Risen, Alleluia, Alleluia! Peace and all good things be yours!

Does Easter make any difference? We celebrate Easter each year with much enthusiasm and joy. We sing beautiful Easter hymns. We see an increase in the number of believers who attend Mass on Easter Sunday. We hear the Easter message once again.

A quick glance at what happened to the disciples after Easter reveals that the events of that weekend did make a difference in their lives. We hear how the disciples were cowering in fear behind locked doors on Easter Day. And they were even more terrified when Jesus suddenly appears before them. It is only after Jesus had told them to look at his hands and feet and watch him eat a meal that a difference was made in their outlook. We are told that they were full of joy (Luke 24:52).

The disciples became different people because their Lord was not dead but alive. They were in the presence of the living Lord.

The two men who were walking to Emmaus on the afternoon of the resurrection were changed by the resurrection of Jesus. The person on whom they had placed all their hopes in was dead. They had given up everything to follow him. They had seen him on the cross, and what is more, now his body had vanished. They are feeling depressed and confused. What are they going to do now?

But look at the difference in those men when they realized that the very person with whom they were talking was the risen Lord himself. You can see resurrection peace take over their lives. They are no longer confused and troubled, worried and anxious, but filled with the joy and confidence that the presence of the living Savior of their lives gives. They know that Jesus had not just died as any other human, but that he had restored fellowship with God and had destroyed sin and death. When they raced back to the other disciples they found that they too had exciting news. I can imagine the joy as they shouted to the travelers from Emmaus as they entered the room, "Hey! We have seen Jesus. He has risen from the dead!"

But what difference does the resurrection make to us today in 2019?

Does Easter still have the same effect on people today as it did back then in those early centuries?

I know we have heard the Easter story many times. It is not like we have heard it for the first time and are all excited about the amazing resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

This does not change the fact that Easter does make a difference to people even in the 21st century. The events of Good Friday and Easter tell us loudly and clearly God has left no stone unturned to save all people including us today.

The wonderful results of Jesus' death and resurrection are passed on to us at our baptism and when we celebrate Holy Communion. In these sacraments God gives to us the forgiveness Jesus won for us on the cross, he gives us eternal life and the promise that we too shall rise from the dead. We are his people. We are his forgiven, resurrected people. We belong to him; we are members of his family.

Because we share in the forgiveness and the resurrection of Jesus; because we have been reconciled with God and all believers are at peace with God; God brings us close together. God has put his chosen, forgiven, resurrected people together in the one holy Catholic Church and all Christian Churches.

You see, Easter breaks down the barriers between God and us. And it should make us break down the barrier between us and our brothers and sisters here on earth.

Easter gets rid of the sinful barriers that prevents us from approaching God in prayer. Easter gets rid of the sin barrier that would prevent us from entering heaven. Easter gets rid of everything that stands between God and us.

Because of Easter we are able to have fellowship with God.

How many times does the resurrected Jesus approach his disciples with the words: "Peace be with you"? It is true he wanted to calm their fears that he was not a ghost, but he was also conveying to them a much deeper truth, that is, his death and resurrection have brought true peace to the relationship between God and his people.

Due to our peace and fellowship with our heavenly Father and we are joined together in Christ through our Baptism. By our baptism in Christ we also have fellowship with one another, as a family in faith. When I say "fellowship" I do not just mean that we have a bring and share meal every now and then. That type of fellowship is important and help us to get to know one another, but Christian fellowship goes much deeper than that. Christian fellowship has its beginnings in the death and resurrection of Jesus.

Just as barriers have been broken down between God and us, so also walls come down between those who are forgiven and resurrected. Relationships are restored and recreated and built up. That is the beginning of true fellowship between Christians. We have true fellowship with one another because we have all been united with Christ.

We need to be reminded of this, especially in this day and age when there is such an emphasis on the individual and the meeting of the individual's needs over and above the needs and rights of others. We must be new in Christ, be a new person in Christ, the Christ in us, makes a difference. We are not concerned chiefly with our own needs and wants but we must be more concerned how we treat those with whom we have been united in Christ.

Easter is the key to our living together in our homes, our community and our church. We can see ourselves as forgiven and beloved sinners and we see our spouse, our children, our friends, our enemies, and our fellow church member as a people for whom Christ has also died. God has established fellowship with each of us, and because of that we have fellowship with one another.

May God give us a fresh understanding of what he has accomplished for us at Easter and that we would listen to his Spirit as He leads us to live the new life.

May the choicest blessings of the Resurrected Christ be yours this Easter season!