

Homily for Easter Sunday
April 21, 2019
By Deacon Nick Thompson

Does anyone remember the original Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory? The original one with Gene Wilder not the weird one that came out a year or so ago. Kids all over the world buying chocolate bars to see who would get the golden tickets; who would get the grand tour of the greatest chocolate factory on earth. The TV announcer says, "This is the day we've all waited for; the day that Willy Wonka has made great in the eyes of children everywhere, rejoice and be glad in it." Well our psalm this morning cries out to us of something far greater than Easter bunnies and chocolate eggs and a one day overdose on candy.

This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad. Our Lord was delivered from the womb of the tomb early on the first day of the week on what is now known as Sunday, the Lord's Day, a day of victory and triumph over death. It is for this reason that we gather here to celebrate, not just this Sunday, but each and every Sunday of the year. Sunday is a day made holy by the resurrection of the Lord. The exact time of when the resurrection occurred is not given, although "early dawn" and "late night" would seem to indicate around the same time depending of course on an individual's perspective. Scripture says

“it was dark” which is also an apt description of Mary’s faith when she first came to the tomb, ignorant of Jesus’ resurrection. We in fact still celebrate this darkness through the Saturday vigil Mass each week as we anticipate a new dawn of resurrection light. Mary, who by the way demonstrates initially more faith than Jesus’ male disciples, comes to the tomb looking for consolation and receives jubilation. John records that Mary is the first witness, showing his high regard for her and for women as he captures the strength of her faith. He tells us that Mary reported what she had witnessed only to the chief apostles, who believed, while Luke in his account of this same event records the initial skepticism of the other apostles. John next records how he and Peter came to the tomb in broad daylight so that no one could suspect them of having stolen the body of Jesus, as the chief priests were later to accuse. We too come each Sunday to the tomb as Mary did perhaps seeking hope, consolation, comfort. When was the last time any of us asked ourselves exactly what it is we seek in this place?

The disciples looked on the tomb. Noting the neatness of the folded linens, which would not have been the case had someone stolen the body. When John looked into the tomb, it is said that he believed. Yet it is unclear from scripture what it is John believed. Did he simply believe Mary’s words, that is, that they had taken the body away? Or did John infer from the neatly folded linen cloths and the prophecies he

knew, that Jesus had indeed risen from the dead. John himself answers the question. He writes, "They did not yet understand that he had to rise from the dead." In examining our own faith and the manner in which we live do we give witness to an understanding of resurrection, of rising from the dead?

Throughout the days immediately following Christ's rising in fact in a mere fifty days, these same apostles bolstered by Christ's appearances and the power of the Holy Spirit came to fully understand the meaning of Christ's resurrection. Peter proclaims, "We are witnesses of all that he did both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree. This man God raised on the third day and granted that he be visible, not to all the people, but to us, the witnesses chosen by God in advance, who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. He commissioned us to preach to the people and testify that he is the one appointed by God as judge of the living and the dead. To him all the prophets bear witness, that everyone who believes in him will receive forgiveness of sins through his name."

Peter passed this knowledge and understanding on to Paul and Paul passed this same knowledge and understanding on to all the newly established communities around the known world. He tells the Colossians, "Brothers and sisters: If then you were raised with Christ,

seek what is above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Think of what is above, not of what is on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ your life appears, then you too will appear with him in glory." It has fallen to us now we are the new generation, each of us the new Paul, whose mission it is to pass on the good news of resurrection to our children and our children's children until Christ comes again.

For Christ promised his faithful disciples, "I will be with you until the end of time." After His labors and His humiliations, Christ finds rest with His Father. Through His cross He entered into the possession of eternal glory. Christ has gained the crown of victory and through Christ men also win their crowns of victory. Humanity was under a curse and subject to the wrath of God. Now we who believe have risen with Christ, our guilt has been destroyed. Christ says to Mary and to us, "Do not be afraid, I rose up and am still with you." Our liturgy places these words in the mouth of the Church, in our mouths, that we may pray them with Christ. The resurrection of Christ is the judgment and condemnation of those who have turned away from God. This is the judgment that was prefigured by the angel who passed through the land of Egypt destroying the first-born of the Egyptians. The Israelites marked the doors of their houses with the blood of the paschal lamb. We are the new Israel, and "Christ our Paschal Lamb is sacrificed." We

mark ourselves with His blood, which we enjoy in this Holy Eucharist. We have been pardoned; we are saved; we shall live.

And we are saved because, "He is risen from the dead!" The resurrection of Christ is a pledge of our own resurrection. It is the foundation upon which our faith rests. It is the guarantee of our redemption and God's assurance that our sins are forgiven and that we are called to eternal life. "This is the day which the Lord hath made; let us be glad and rejoice in it. Give praise to the Lord, for He is good, for His mercy endures forever. Alleluia." "Christ our Pasch is sacrificed. . . . The Lamb redeems the sheep. Christ, the innocent One, has reconciled sinners to the Father."

Listen then this morning and respond with joy when at the very center of this Eucharistic celebration and every Eucharistic celebration, we hear the great prayer of thanksgiving, "Let us give thanks to the lord our God." Join with the angels and saints; cry out "It is right to give him thanks and praise." For it is our privilege to glorify Christ our Passover who was sacrificed, for He is the true Lamb who took away the sins of the world, who by His Death destroyed our death and by His Resurrection restored our life. Easter for us is Redemption obtained — sin destroyed, death over come, divine life brought back to us, the resurrection of our body. This is the true golden ticket the promise of

immortality. This is the true everlasting gobstopper eternal happiness in the kingdom of heaven.