



Alleluia! Christ is Risen!

Happy Easter!!

These words and this Paschal Feast may seem strange to us during a time of global pandemic when we are being advised to keep our distance from each other and are unable to join together as a community to celebrate the Resurrection of Christ. Indeed, this celebration comes during a time when many of us have lost our jobs and are concerned for our health and the wellbeing of our loved ones. No one in the world has been left unaffected by the impact of the coronavirus.

Yet, it is precisely during this time, when darkness and uncertainty seem to cover the earth, that we find the tomb empty because Christ has risen from the dead. The impact from the virus remains among us just as Christ continues to bear the marks from the nails in his hands. The resurrection has not changed the historical reality of the crucifixion; it has *transformed* the meaning of its reality. The significance of Christ's death is now one of hope which fills the earth, because his death has given way to a new life.

As I mentioned during the celebration of the Easter Vigil, an ancient tradition in the Church speaks of how after Jesus died on the cross he went into the netherworld and visited Adam, the first human. Adam was terrified, but Christ assured him of his peace and promised that he would not only restore Adam back to the earthly garden that he

had known, but that he would bring him forth to a heavenly garden! Our way during this crisis does not lead back to the way things were before Covid-19; we are being drawn *forth* into a new way, a new life with Christ!

Pope Francis, during his Easter celebration, commented that the proclamation of hope, new life and victory over death should be "a different 'contagion,' a message transmitted from heart to heart, for every human heart awaits this good news". He explained that the celebration of Easter "is not a magic formula that makes problems vanish. No, the resurrection of Christ is not that. Instead, it is the victory of love over the root of evil, a victory that does not bypass suffering and death, but passes through them, opening a path in the abyss, transforming evil into good: this is the unique hallmark of the power of God."

Soon after the resurrection, Peter went back to his old way of life, he went back to what he knew; he went fishing. We are told that he took the disciples with him and when Jesus appeared to them, they did not immediately recognize him (John 21:4). We hear a similar story time and time again, that soon after the resurrection, the disciples (those who were closest to him) did not recognize Jesus! In the Gospel of Luke, two disciples were on the road to Emmaus, heading *away* from the site of the resurrection, when Jesus began walking with them on the way; but their hearts were heavy and they couldn't recognize him (Luke 24:13-35). Finally, we hear of Mary Magdalene, who overwhelmed by grief at the site of the empty tomb, was unable to recognize the presence of Christ in her midst; she could only see a gardener. Jesus tells her to stop clinging to the way things were *before* but to go *forward* and to share the Good News (John 20:17).

The disciples couldn't initially recognize Christ, they needed a new set of eyes; they needed to walk in the power of the resurrection. In the ancient tradition, Jesus told Adam to 'wake up' and recognize his dignity. In the midst of this crisis, we too, are being invited to walk with dignity in the power of the resurrection.

I am so grateful for this community here at St. John Eudes; for each and every one of you. At a time when so much has changed so quickly, we have continued to persevere and to remain in communion. I extend my gratitude in a special way to our school

principal, Barbara Danowitz, who so gracefully led our school through an academic accreditation as well as our acting principal, Lizette Strom, who has enabled Mrs. Danowitz to take a medical leave of absence while also guiding our school to an online remote learning format. I also thank our teachers and school parents who have so quickly adjusted to this new reality and managed to balance the responsibilities of teaching at home, working and maintaining a household.

I am so grateful for our tech team of Clarissa Martinez, Paul Lacson, Barbara Escobar and Dana Howell, who have in the matter of days, shifted and enabled us to live-stream our masses and participate in the liturgical celebrations from home. I thank Gina Ibarra for her presence, steadiness and joyful spirit in the parish office, when there have been countless adjustments and uncertainties. Chris Ranieri has helped to organize groups to go grocery shopping and make other essential errands. Deacon Sargon and Jeanie Younan continue to bring their wisdom and graceful way everywhere they go. Marta Garcia and Ernie Star have redesigned our parish website again and again to capture our present reality. Sr. Pia St. Romain and Isela Mora offer a cheerful voice and pleasant laugh both in the office and on the phones. Fr. Dave brings his gift for storytelling as well as a global perspective for life.

There truly are too many people to thank in a simple letter and so therefore I must thank everyone! I thank all of the doctors and nurses who are on the front lines during this pandemic day after day. I thank the clerks in the grocery stores and pharmacies who face crowds of people who hunger for food and medicine. I am so grateful to all of the grandparents who have learned how to do a Zoom conference so they can continue to see their grandchildren's faces and hear their voices. I thank all of the parents who go to bed exhausted every night unsure of how they will make it through another day. I thank all of the parishioners who have been so patient during this time of separation from the physical church building while sending in so many letters, emails and calls of encouragement and support. Thank you everyone!

The reality is that Christ is all around us. We *are* the Body of Christ. Do we recognize our dignity? Do we recognize the presence of Christ in our midst? I just watched a short video that a friend sent over of a young girl named Stella. She was breaking open an Easter Egg while explaining to her mother that Easter is everyone's birthday. So it is. We are all given a new life at Easter. Happy Birthday to YOU! We *are* Christ.

May the grace and power of the resurrection truly soak down to our roots so that the gospel joy of this day may not only be a temporary joy or a happy day only for Jesus, but a joy that radiates out in our very way of life and that truly becomes our birthday into a new life.

Blessings in the Resurrection,

Father Ethan