



Homily for 4/3 and 4/4/2021

Easter Vigil & Easter Sunday

Very Rev. J. David Carter, JCL, JV

Christ is Risen! He is Risen indeed!
Happy Passover! Jesus is our Passover Lamb!

Christ our Pasch has been slain, Alleluia. The angel of death now passes over those washed in the blood of this new covenant of salvation. We rejoice with our newly baptized and newly confirmed Catholics who received the saving sacraments in the light of the Resurrection.

We celebrate this year also with a little sense of relief. For almost 2000 years, Christians throughout the world have celebrated the rising of Christ from the dead in their churches without fail, at least somewhere in the world. Even in times of persecution in one place in the Church, believers gathered in another part of the world held up the arms of prayer for the sake of the whole world. Even as one member of the body was sick, the other members took up the charge to pray unceasingly. Just as the Jewish people, our ancestors in the faith, held a yearly remembrance of the Passover and Exodus from Egypt by God's strong hand, so too, we the children of the new and everlasting promise, have held an unbroken chain of yearly commemoration since the time of that first Easter Morning when the chains of sin and death were destroyed for all humanity.

Each year we have the tradition of marking the year of our Lord on the Paschal Candle that is lit at the Easter Vigil. Last year, the 2020 candle was lit in the customary darkness but also in the strange and unique loneliness that would characterize the whole of last year. The whole world had come to a halt, and in very few places was Easter celebrated publicly – not in Jerusalem, not in Rome, least of all Chattanooga. This event in world history will not soon be forgotten. But, looking back now, it also reminds us that there are even more powerful moments in history that still outshine the present darkness with a perennial light. Even if the paschal mysteries were not celebrated in public, they were still celebrated. The present darkness could not overcome this light. Even in the midst of a global pandemic, Christ's resurrection was still powerfully present to us, maybe even more so. Just like in times of epidemic or persecution in the past, the light of Christ was celebrated in the catacombs of the believer's hearths and homes. It was celebrated in the consecrated spaces of our churches, even if it was behind closed doors or only accessible virtually. The light of Christ is undimmed and continues to burn brightly. The storms of this world are not enough to snuff it out. Viruses can do their best to shake the faith of believers, but the threat of death is nothing to the one who knows the power of the Resurrection. Now that we are coming out of the shadows of the valley of death, we continue to cling to the light of Christ as we celebrate this Easter in the year 2021. A new paschal candle has been lit. Christ's victory over sin and death is still celebrated. This year, I invite you to embrace the opportunity we have now to renew our baptismal promises with extra fervor. Let's not take it for granted. Let's see it as the precious gift it is. Let's treasure it a little more dearly. Let us sing a little louder the song of great praise, Alleluia! O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? Christ our pasch has been slain, alleluia! Christ is Risen! He is Risen Indeed!

May Jesus Christ be Praised.