

He is risen! (3 times) It is time to Unleash Easter Joy!

This is my 31ST celebration of Easter Vigil at Corpus Christi. It is a unique experience.

Over the years I have run into two different versions of believers who celebrate who gather here to celebrate the Lord's resurrection.

First there are those who are joyfully overwhelmed by the Easter experience. Example: Jeff Smale. He was baptized and joined the community at the Easter Vigil ten years ago. Tonight continues to be the highpoint of the year for him. / I wish I could be like Jeff this evening, on fire with the love of the Lord. Maybe some of our candidates and catechumens and maybe some of you are ablazing with the Spirit this evening.

But for many of us believers, we get too busy and preoccupied with life to encounter the risen Lord. One author puts it this way. Our preoccupations and obsessions render us blind as bats—left to fly by radar.

**I believe, in our day the problem is not so much our badness as our busyness,
not so much with our sin as our obsessions.**

Let me try to explain this: God is having difficulty today in revealing his love and resurrection to such busy and preoccupied persons.

Where we differ from past generations is more in the pace of our lives than in our moral inadequacies. We are pressured, preoccupied, hurried, hell-bent, and driven in a way that previous generations never faced.

There are a myriad of factors affecting our sight—mass media, more leisure time, unbridled romance and sex, and philosophies of self-fulfillment which point us towards a salvation within our world.

However, the earth is **ablaze** with the fire of God, with sights, sounds, smells, touches and tastes that are enough to make anyone want to take one's shoes off before the holy; there's resurrection a plenty!

One good way to approach the feast of the resurrection is to check out the Gospel stories. For instance, in today's gospel story we find three women who have witnessed Jesus' suffering and death. They are also the first to witness an empty tomb. History tells us that Jesus suffered, died and was buried. History also witnesses to the empty tomb. No one denies these facts.

But what happens next is unique: the women are told by two young men in dazzling garments that Jesus is risen and goes before them. They are not too sure what to do with this message. They are not even sure if they should believe it. They run and tell the eleven disciples.

Then Peter gets into the act and goes to the tomb of the one who suffered, died and was buried. He peers inside the empty tomb and sees the cloths folded up where the body laid.

PAUSE

And so here WE are: this Saturday evening (Sunday morning).

We know for a fact that Jesus of Nazareth suffered. We know he was crucified. We know that much. We also know that the tomb where he was buried was empty. And as we ponder the scriptures we begin to hear the witnesses tell their stories of his resurrection. For the next 50 days of this Easter season we will hear from scripture the stories of people who give witness to their encounter with the risen Lord. The three women, Peter, the eleven, the two disciples returning from Emmaus, Mary Magdelene, Thomas, 120 disciples, St. Stephen and Paul. Person after person will share with us their personal encounter with the risen Lord.

We see their lives radically changed.

- **They come out of hiding;**
- **they boldly share the good news.**
- **They form a community of beloved disciples,**
- **they suffer and die witnessing to their belief in the risen Lord,**
- **They simply love one another ... even their enemies.**

Their witness to Jesus' risen life is SOOO powerful that 2,000 years later their message has spread to the ends of the earth.

That is why during this fifty days of Easter period which we begin tonight (today) we spend so much time reflecting on the early church's encounter with the Risen Lord in sacred scripture.

Yes, for the next 50 days we will focus on some of the 31 times in the Bible that people have encounters with the risen Lord. For the next 50 days we will celebrate our parish theme to **Unleash Easter Joy and give witness to the risen Lord to our families, friends, co-workers classmates and neighbors.**

One example of **Unleashing Easter Joy is the arrival of 55 youth from Bishop Foley High School who will invade our neighborhood this Friday and clean up one of the most challenging blocks in our community bringing hope and energy to a discouraged part of our**

neighborhood. A week later on Saturday, May 4, ALL of us will be invited by O'Hair Park Community Association to continue the clean up, fix up, in our neighborhood.

There are so many ways to **Unleash Easter Joy**.

I invite all of you to enter into the spirit of the season. Here are some suggestions: (Holy homework)

1. Make Sunday worship a priority for you these next 50 days.
2. Pick up a little white book of prayer to reflect on the Easter season.
3. Reach out as individuals and households with acts of charity to those in need.
4. Invite others to join us as we gather Sunday after Sunday to give witness to the risen Lord.

Let us **Unleash Easter Joy!**

He is Risen! (3 X)