

The Paper Pulpit

(Reflections from the Pastor)

The Celebration of our Lord's Resurrection at Easter

May the grace and peace of our Risen Lord Jesus be with you. Do you know that God loves you?

Let me begin by welcoming everyone: to those who join us weekly, to those who join us less than weekly, to those visiting family and friends and to those who may be joining us for the first time. We hope you join us again and again.

Today, Christians around the world celebrate Easter. We gather today for lots of reasons. Some of us come to celebrate the resurrection and wish to be reminded that we too may have eternal life with Jesus. Some of us are here to praise and worship our Lord Jesus. Some of us have come because we've been dragged here by our parents, family or friends (I hope these are very few). Some of us are here because we are facing a difficulty in our lives and we need God. Some of us have come because this is what we do on Easter Sunday. Some of us come seeking hope in a seemingly hopeless world. Some of us come simply to be reminded of God's love. But whatever the reason,

Welcome to our celebration of the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus at St. Max's.

Now I must warn you, there are a lot of things in the world to distract us from the Triumph and Joy of this day. There are the physical things that would have us focus on them, rather than our faith. There are sporting events and so much else that get in the way of weekly Mass. We hear of wars and rumors of wars. There are earthquakes and tsunamis. We may have lost a job or fear the loss of a job. We see on the news disturbing things about some Church leaders. Some of us have seen our savings dwindle and we worry about our retirement. Can Washington politicians solve our country's woes? There are lots of other things on TV and the internet which the world throws at us to distract us from the hope and the promise of this day. You'd think the world is going to hell. Do you think Jesus wants us to stay there? I don't think so.

In many ways we live in a Good Friday world, a world filled with suffering, anguish, pain, sorrow, sin and death. But Christ doesn't let us stay there. If you are experiencing any one or more of the difficulties listed above or are experiencing some other difficulty that I didn't list, there is hope. Jesus does not wish us to stay at the cross. He didn't either. Yes, he does say we will have crosses to bear, but he does not want you to stay with your cross. That's why the message of Easter is so important. It reminds us that we're Resurrection People and we have a God that offers us hope and is a God to be excited about. We need to move from the cross to the grave to the resurrection and be reminded God did it because he loves you.

We are a people of hope. Easter reminds us that Good Friday doesn't have the last word. God has the last Word and that Word is Jesus. That Word is Love. Jesus rose from the Dead, with the promise of eternal life for all who follow Him. Jesus wraps us in God's Love, Mercy and Grace. Jesus, whose strength fills us and fuels our souls. Jesus who gave His life for us so we could experience the weightlessness of forgiveness and both the joy and hope of resurrection. This gives the Christian great hope, comfort, joy and peace especially in times of need. How exciting! For example, I know of folks who have experienced great sadness in their life, such as an illness or job loss, the loss of a loved one or a hurtful divorce, or maybe a family member who hurt you deeply and yet they accept it with peace and to know God is with them. Others get angry and bitter. That is not what Jesus wants for us. He offers us peace, hope and love. Over the years, I've been with many people who were close to facing death and I've found, over and over again, a sense of peace and acceptance. A peace that comes because Jesus was raised from the dead and they know that they also will be raised. The family has hope. As their priest, it's never been a complete goodbye because I know that I will see them again—I know this because Jesus was raised from the dead on Easter morning. This gives us all hope, comfort, joy and peace. How exciting!

Hopefully this day you are full of the resurrection; you are full of joy and peace and God's love. But if not, you do have a choice. You can stay at the cross or experience the resurrection. The choice is yours.

Remember, God loves you. He died for you. He rose for you. You are always welcome at St. Max's. Jesus is inviting you and so are we. Please make us your spiritual home. We are here for you. Let us all continue to pray to Jesus that we remain and continue to grow as a Holy and Vibrant parish. This will require prayer, time and effort on all our parts. If all of us work together, always remembering to offer our efforts for the greater glory of God, we can make this happen. Then, we can truly understand and celebrate the Joy of Christ's Resurrection. How exciting!

On behalf of the parish staff,
may the blessings, comfort, love, joy and peace of our Risen Lord and Savior be with you always.

In Christ, Fr. Jim Trempe