

Easter Sunday
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Our Lady of Dallas Cistercian Abbey
Solemnity of Easter – Year B
Sunday, April 1, 2018

Brothers and sisters, I *believe* Peter and John and Mary of Magdala...as I pray each one of you does, too, and from the bottom of your heart. I believe them as much as I believe that George Washington is buried at Mount Vernon and was our first president, or that my dad was born in Tucson, Arizona, even though I was not alive and present to see such things take place. Actually, I believe these saints of the empty tomb *even much more than that*, for I believe them *with* the Church *and her saints* and two thousand years of beautiful, enlightening, and ennobling *Tradition* alongside me, not only giving me knowledge, but elevating *my entire way* of thinking, living, relating, hoping and persevering. These people, the first saints who stood, awestruck and daring to hope and believe, at the empty tomb, are not the inventions of some late first century Greek author whose literary and stylistic obsessions bear a curious resemblance to those of certain 20th and 21st century so-called Bible experts...and they are not angels, either. They're just flesh and blood, like you and me. But I believe them. And the Church believes them, and the Church believes that they are alive, alive forever, in Christ, because Christ is now alive forever. These saints at the empty tomb saw Jesus Risen from the dead. They ate and

drank with Him, and learned from Him over the course of several weeks of mysterious encounters with Him the mystery of His life and the plan that God fulfilled in Him. That is their testimony. That is what they *said*; and they gave their every day, after that Sunday morning, over to the task of building a community of grace and truth centered on this EVENT, this FACT. And they spent themselves ever afterward in spreading the good news about this FACT to the whole world. Their *testimony* became a *community* and a *proclamation* that changed the whole world. It grew roots, deep into human history and culture, such that even when Modern Man tries to flee from Christ or forget or reject Him, the most that people manage to do is to live in a *post-Christian* society that still keeps referring itself back to Christ, that still points in various ways to the marks of Christ's life, death, and Resurrection on human life and history.

Christ changes everything, for all humans and all of history, but especially and in the fullest and most joyful way, for us who believe. But we who profess to be Christians, who *believe*, must continue the lifelong effort of throwing out the old yeast and of feeding on Christ. People must be able to SEE the impact of Christ's Resurrection in OUR lives! *Therefore, let us celebrate the feast, not with the old yeast, the yeast of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.* Wickedness, malice, and insincerity: those are ways in which Christians can undo for themselves—but only for themselves, not really in reality—what we

celebrate today. Christ rose from the dead, and that FACT is quite independent of US. To be sure, we can weaken its effects in ourselves, in various ways, just like one can hide in dark places or wear really good sunblock to dampen the effects on him or herself of the shining sun. But let us today set aside any thought of such foolishness. Today's gospel proclamation calls upon us to celebrate with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. This bread is, first of all, Christ Himself, in the Eucharist. Easter and the Eucharist, the Eucharist and Easter! Gazing into the empty tabernacle and at the barren altar the past couple of days, it struck me more than ever, how they go together, always. For the Risen Christ wills to be the food that nourishes us as we walk along the Way that He also is, guided by the Truth that He also is, persevering in hope towards the fullness of Life that He also is! So how does a Christian begin to celebrate rightly the victory of Christ over sin and death in His Resurrection? By staying close to Him, throughout one's lifetime, in the Eucharist.

How else do we celebrate? Well, with Hungarian sausage, cheese, crackers and champagne, if you were with the monks last night at 1:30am. But I digress. ALL of us can, and must, celebrate with an ever-deepening sincerity and truth *in ourselves, in our relationships*, in our work and our desires. This means living a deep and authentic spiritual life, this means real daily prayer. This means offering over to Christ's Holy Spirit our relationships with friends, family members, spouses,

parents, children, students...that the Spirit may purify them for all that is good and true. This means community service, but starting with the people that sleep in our room or next door or down the hallway from us. This means a lot of effort! Either I believe Jesus of Nazareth rose from the dead and lives now forevermore and I roll up my sleeves and base my life on this as much as I can, as often as I can, in every aspect of my life, hoping to share in that Resurrection one day.....or I am not celebrating as Saint Paul urges us to, I am not *running* to the empty tomb as Peter and John did. So, sincerity is a lifelong effort. This effort also entails *sharing* our faith. A faith that is not shared is not lived sincerely, for no sincere person hides this treasure away, buried for safekeeping in the field of a self-satisfied, self-contained life. Celebrating the Risen Christ with sincerity and truth in ourselves means having the reckless heart of lover, in addition to being innocent as doves and cunning as serpents in our moral life, and with the use of our reason, and in our virtue of prudence. The reckless heart of the lover is what drives Peter and John to break into a dead sprint at the first slimmer of hope in Christ's Resurrection. For us, to have this kind of heart as we hear the Church's proclamation of the good Easter news is to live in the mode that Peter himself would later describe in his First Letter, in which he says about Christ, and us: "*although you have never seen Him, you love Him, and without seeing you now believe in Him, and rejoice with inexpressible joy touched with glory because you are achieving faith's goal, your salvation.*"

As we continue this Easter Mass, and continue our lives, we know there will inevitably be difficult days, when the light of the Easter message is obscured for us. In those moments let us also remember the words of the angel at the empty tomb: that Christ the Risen One goes before us to Galilee. He leads us back, year after year, Easter after Easter, to that place where He first began to reveal to us, by his words and deeds, just *how much* God loves us, and just *how much* **wisdom** and **compassion** and **generosity** and **heartfelt charity** a human being is capable of, and to *what a great destiny* He calls each of us. If ever during this Easter season we feel that we are ceasing to celebrate with sincerity and truth, let us hear Christ's angel calling us back to begin again in the same way that we first became disciples of this Jesus of Nazareth. Let us remember the basic school of humanity that is Galilee, the merciful deeds and the teachings of the Sermon on the Mount that first set our hearts yearning for the fullness of life and friendship with God in Christ, and, beginning again, let us rejoice that we are indeed, by His grace, achieving faith's goal, our salvation. Amen.