

Acts 10:34a, 37-43
Ps 118:1-2, 16-17, 22-23
Col 3:1-4 or I Cor 5:6b-8
Jn 20:1-9

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He's Alive! ... It's true! He's Alive!! ... It's true! Happy Easter. What a joy it is to see the Church so packed. To those who are in town visiting family and friends – welcome to our Church. To those who only occasionally come to worship – it is wonderful that you are here. To those who have made the Lenten journey together: “This is the day that the Lord has made; let’s rejoice and be glad!” He’s Alive. It’s true!

Easter – what an amazing day. More so than any other day of the year, all around the world, Christians like ourselves, pack into churches to rejoice in this day, this day that the Lord has made, this day in which our Savior Jesus the Christ rose from the dead. Today more people walk through those doors into this Church than even on Christmas Eve. And as festive as Christmas Eve is, today you are even better dressed!

Why are we here? When you leave this Church at Christmas, you are greeted by a neighborhood decked out in holiday cheer. You return to beautifully decorated homes, piles of presents, and countless parties that go on for a week. That won’t happen today.

I am sure that most of us on this Easter Sunday will gather for a good meal and visit with loved ones. But there will be no pile of presents and life’s routine will return to normal by tomorrow. So why is this the morning when the churches are packed and the Malls are empty?

I believe it is because this is the feast that truly speaks to us. This is the feast that meets us right where we live. This is the feast that addresses our deepest fears and our greatest hopes. Today we celebrate that, in Christ Jesus, we are saved! We celebrated that God’s great love for us, in the person of Jesus, has conquered sin, sickness, and death. Now that’s worth rejoicing over. Those who claim that our human race has no need to be saved must, instead, believe that sin, sickness, and death have the final say. ... It can be hard to admit to ourselves and to others that we need to be saved. But that’s why we are here. That’s why we celebrate Easter. We join with our fellow sinners, to remind ourselves and each other what we believe. And what is it that we believe? We believe that, He’s Alive. ... It’s true.

Today's first Reading is from the Acts of the Apostles. That book of the Bible, the fifth book of the New Testament, tells us the story of the first believers. They were not any different from us. They came in all shapes and sizes and from every walk of life. They had great faith and great troubles. They had hopes and dreams. And like us, they knew that they needed to be saved from sin and death. They embraced the message of the Savior, took up their crosses and followed him confident that some day they too would be raised from the dead.

Our Gospel recounts how the disciples first came to understand that Jesus had conquered death. Mary Magdala's great love for Jesus did not end with his death. She has come to the grave only to find it empty. In her heart she knows what has happened. She realizes that He's Alive! She needs others to confirm what her heart has already told her. She runs to the Apostles to tell them of the empty grave. Peter and John run to the grave. Peter apparently runs like I do, so John arrives at the grave before him. Out of respect for Peter, John waits. They go into the empty tomb. Immediately John understands and believes that, "He's Alive!"

Parents and grandparents, believing friends, and any one here whom other look to for advice and guidance please note the dynamic between Mary Magdala, John, and Peter. Mary and John have come to believe but they need Peter's affirmation. They need to know that Peter is a believer too. They need to know that Peter realizes that Jesus has saved them. So when your children ask, "Why is the Church so full?" You need to answer with conviction, "Because it is Easter!" And when they ask why everyone is dressed so well, you need to answer, "Because it is Easter!" And when they ask, "Why is even Daddy wearing a tie with his jeans?" Answer, "Because it is Easter!" And when they ask why everyone seems so joyful, answer "Because it is Easter!" And when they ask why we celebrate Easter, answer "Because, He's Alive! ... It's true!" Happy Easter.