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A young boy was walking through a wooded area near his house when something caught his attention. It was a silky pouch on the branch of a tree that seemed to have activity within. He walked very close to it and could make out what seemed to be the head of a large insect struggling to emerge. "This looks like a hopeless task," the boy said to himself. "If that thing is trying to get out it will never make it." He watched it for a while longer, but when the struggle subsided a bit, he took out his pocketknife and cut a slit along the side of the pouch hoping by his action to assist the process. This freed the insect. But instead of crawling off or taking flight it fell to the ground where it eventually died. What the young boy did not know was that what he had cut open was the pouch of the pupa stage of a caterpillar larvae transforming itself into a colorful butterfly. It is through this very struggle to break through that the butterfly gains the muscle mass and strength to escape the pouch and fly away. Without a lengthy struggle the insect remains hopelessly weak. By rushing the process with his knife the boy actually ends the life-giving struggle and sets free an undeveloped, feeble and immature insect, which could never survive.

A human analogy for this same process of transformation happens when a baby is born. While in the womb, the baby faces a huge and traumatic struggle to enter life outside. We are all familiar with the pains of a mother giving birth. They are enormous. But the baby also performs arduous and distressing tasks. He or she must first be squeezed through a very small opening. Then, since he can no longer simply absorb oxygen from the liquids of the mother, he must draw it from the air by expanding and contracting his lungs. More unfamiliar tasks present themselves when, by crying and sucking, he must work for his food. Gaining new life is replete with suffering and pain.

Another great passage to new life occurs at death. This, too, most often is a slow and painful process, a great struggle, signaling an unimaginable transformation. If we have ever sat at the bedside of someone dying we know what an exhausting and draining effort this final release can be. It challenges our own hope of keeping faith and courage when our turn to pass arrives. But it is through this very struggle, and many like it endured beforehand, that spiritual strength and stature grow. The new life of pure spirit, which lies beyond death, ironically, follows the same laws of transformation in nature. To enter the unfamiliar world of life-to-come we must allow ourselves to be stripped of everything we held near and dear in this one. We must learn to give ourselves over to the process rather than grasp at the levers of control. Our attachments to health, well-being, comfort, loved ones and, most of all, self possession must all go if we are to learn the art of self surrender by which we are reborn into eternal life. A person of great spiritual insight called this "the journey of entering the Cloud of Unknowing," and, again, quite ironically, authored a book of the same name, anonymously.

Tonight we heard, once again, of the great journey of the Israelites from slavery to freedom. We heard of those who endured deprivation and suffering in the dunes of the desert, a motley group of gypsies, forged into a unified nation, unique in its values, laws and identity. Another great struggle to new birth.

We have heard of another new birth, this one of a community of Christians, born of the sufferings of Jesus, enduring savage persecutions and for two thousand years bearing the standard of God's great revelation, all the while proclaiming, like its founder, the hope of Resurrection. **New life is something we believe in.**

We believe in the redemptive value of suffering and struggle that leads to it; In the bonding of Eucharist which forges us into a community forever renewing itself. We declare the finality of death to be an illusion; That God would not give us the longings for eternal life if he intended to snatch them away from us in the end. We believe in God's goodness and love; not his vengeance and retaliation. We believe in trust, not in fear.

All this is what we celebrate today. We look into the empty tomb and see the fullness of life. We see in our suffering and pain an opportunity of learning to embrace a process of surrender, which yields up passing satisfactions for eternal ones. We willingly enter the cloud of unknowing so that we may see truth clearly and in its entirety.

It is the Resurrection that validates all our hopes, turns sorrow to joy, replaces fear with trust. It is the Resurrection that blesses the struggles of life with refreshment and unflagging vision. It is God's promise and greatest gift to his children. And it is a gift we gladly pass on to those whose journey has brought them here tonight, to Baptism and Reception into our Church. They will forever be bonded to us through Christ in Sacramental Union. And we gratefully declare to them and one another,

HAPPY EASTER!!