

Christ is risen, He is *truly* risen! Happy Easter everyone! I want to begin by acknowledging our beloved catechumens and RCIA candidates: Tiff, Adam, Bob, Marco, Sharon, and Adama. And on behalf of Fr. Tom, Fr. Guency, and all of the clergy, staff, and parishioners of St. Ignatius, I want to congratulate you on your reception into full communion with the Catholic Church tonight! We are so happy for you and proud of you as you join us in Christ's Church and begin a *new* journey with us of following our risen Savior and allowing Him to love you, sanctify you, and lead you as one of His faithful disciples!

Our Lord has lovingly brought you to this point in your life because out of His unconditional love for you, He's inviting you into a deeper, more personal relationship with Him, *in and through* His Catholic Church. Make no mistake, an exciting new chapter is beginning in your life and all of Heaven is rejoicing with us tonight at your reception into the Church and your desire to love and follow Christ more closely as He calls you to the heights of holiness and invites you to be happy with Him now and forever in His Kingdom.

So as you begin this new journey with us and our risen Savior, know that we love you, we're praying for you, and we're here for you. Always stay close to our risen Savior through prayer and the sacraments, especially the Most Holy Eucharist, which is the *greatest* visible Gift on earth because it is *truly* Jesus Himself: Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity!

I also want to say that this is my first time as a priest doing the Easter Vigil *with* catechumens and candidates entering the Church! And so it is such a great honor, joy, and blessing for me to preside at this Easter Vigil and bring you Christ in the Sacraments of Initiation as you enter His Church. May God bless and protect all of you!

Congratulations!

Brothers and sisters, as human beings, we *absolutely love good news!* And so whenever we receive authentically good news, we rejoice and celebrate! Well on this most sacred night, which the Church literally calls, "The Mother of All Vigils," we joyfully celebrate the *greatest news we could ever receive—the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ!* On this most sacred night, we celebrate our eternal redemption in Christ, Who *truly* rose from the dead, thereby conquering

our future death! In the Resurrection of Jesus, we celebrate God's definitive victory over all evil!

The Resurrection of Christ is undoubtedly the greatest and most consequential event in all of human history. ***Make no mistake, the Resurrection of Jesus really happened!*** It's not a cleverly devised fictional tale—for not only did the Apostles have absolutely no earthly, political, or financial motive to lie about the Resurrection, but according to the Gospels, the Apostles themselves didn't even believe it at first! But once they accepted the Resurrection for what it was, the Apostles were an unstoppable spiritual force, going to the ends of the known world and most of them dying unspeakable deaths of martyrdom for the sake of this monumental Good News!

Brothers and sisters, ***our entire Catholic faith is based on this Good News! As a Church, we are a people of Good News!*** Literally, that's what the word "Gospel" means, in Greek, *Evangelion*, "Good News"! ***The Good News of Jesus' saving Passion, Death, and Resurrection should define our entire life, period.*** The Resurrection of Jesus should ***absolutely change us***—it should change how we think,

how we live, how we suffer, and how we relate to God and others. The Resurrection is the *supreme proof* that *Jesus is God!* And so if *Jesus is God*, then that changes everything: then we should listen to Him, follow Him, obey Him, humbly conform our entire life to Him, His teachings, and the teachings of His Catholic Church, which He Himself established upon the Apostles in order to sanctify us and ultimately bring us home to Him in Heaven.

So do we live our daily life according to the Good News of the Resurrection? Or do we live as if the Resurrection never happened? Miserable and without hope? As disciples of Christ, we can be tempted to celebrate, focus on, and live by the Good News of the Resurrection *only* at Easter time—as if the Resurrection doesn't matter outside of Easter. This is a very destructive temptation that we need to firmly reject, for our whole life as Catholics must be *defined* by the Good News of the Resurrection and the saving hope that it proclaims!

As fallen creatures, when we experience suffering and pain, we tend to be insular and dwell *solely* on our suffering, wallowing in it with self-pity, misery, frustration, anger, and sadness. Yet as disciples of our

crucified and risen Savior, we must *always* live in the light of the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is the *greatest news* in all of human history! We should never view our suffering apart from the reality of the Resurrection! Rather if we share in Jesus' suffering and death, we will also share in the glory of His Resurrection!

In light of the Resurrection, we as disciples of Jesus must *never* be intimidated by suffering, evil, and death. In light of the Resurrection of Christ, we can look death in the eye and with St. Paul exclaim, "Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?" For it is *through Him, with Him, and in Him*, that death has lost! In Christ crucified and risen, the forces of darkness have been defeated once and for all! The war has already been won for us! In the risen Christ, good will always over evil! And as a buddy of mine who's studying to be a priest in Poland once said to me, "Because He is risen, we can face tomorrow!" This is our Catholic faith—this is the Good News that we're called to joyfully live by in faith, hope, and love, regardless of the circumstances of our lives!

I'd like to close with the powerful words of Pope St. John Paul II, who, while on visit to Australia in November 1986, said: "We do not pretend that life is all beauty. We are aware of darkness and sin, of poverty and pain. But we know Jesus has conquered sin and passed through his own pain to the glory of the Resurrection. And we live in the light of his Paschal Mystery - the mystery of his Death and Resurrection. *"We are an Easter People and Alleluia is our song!"* We are not looking for a shallow joy but rather a joy that comes from faith, that grows through unselfish love, that respects the "fundamental duty of love of neighbour, without which it would be unbecoming to speak of Joy". We realize that joy is demanding; it demands unselfishness; it demands a readiness to say with Mary: "Be it done unto me according to thy word."

Brothers and sisters, on this most sacred Easter night, may we joyfully live and proclaim with Holy Mother Church the greatest news we could ever receive: Christ is risen! He is *truly* risen! Alleluia!