

Happy Second Sunday of Easter! Easter Sunday was a week ago, but this morning's gospel is about what happened in the evening of the day of resurrection. That is when Jesus came and stood among his disciples, and breathed on them, and gave them a new mission;--that was all on that same day of Easter.

We know that God loves us because of the crucifixion, by what he did for us on Good Friday. He sacrificed himself for us; he experienced all that agony and despair for us. "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me!" O sacred head, sore wounded, defiled and put to scorn. Love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all. That is how we know God loves us:--by his precious death and sacrifice, our sins are all forgiven; our life is redeemed.

And we know that he is God by what happened on Easter, by his resurrection. Jesus rose from the dead, and that means if we believe in him, like the criminal hanging next to him, we have life everlasting. Hail thee, festival day! Day whereon Christ arose, breaking the kingdom of death. Death is conquered, we are free, Christ has won the victory.

On Good Friday, evil triumphs over good; good is sacrificed and evil wins. On Easter, all that gets reversed:--good triumphs over evil; life triumphs over death.

Life everlasting is a big subject. The kingdom of heaven is tough to think about, just as it is tough for fish to think about life on land. What we know for sure is that there will be a lot of reconciliation and love. But Easter is not just about life after death; life everlasting also means eternal renewal; it means newness of life now, which is the point of today's gospel.

That's what it brought to the disciples. They were demoralized and afraid after the crucifixion, huddled in a house with the doors locked. But the resurrection brought them a new life. They rejoiced. It animated them and recharged them. Jesus said to them, "As the Father has sent me, so I send you."

And that's what Easter brings to us. Easter changes everything. It brings to the world a new spirit; it imbues everything and everyone with importance and dignity and grace and beauty. It brings God's love. The resurrection means that, if we believe in Him, all our tombs are empty.

Maybe we have something that torments us. We might feel depressed or anxious or fearful or stressed out. We may be haunted with guilt about something, and can't forgive ourselves. We might take medication or drugs or alcohol or get therapy, but the demons still come, especially at night, and we don't know what to do about it.

Then comes Easter. What does Easter mean? It means the stone is rolled away, and that tomb is empty.

Maybe we have lost someone, a loved one or a friend, and we miss that person terribly. There is a hole in our life and an ache. The passage of time helps with the grief, but the sense of loss is a constant new companion.

Then comes Easter. What does Easter mean? It means the stone is rolled away, and that tomb is empty.

We may be estranged from someone, someone we are not supposed to be estranged from, maybe a relative, and it bothers us. We never meant to do anything wrong, and maybe the other person really didn't either, but by now it's just easier to avoid the person and avoid the whole situation. But that doesn't really make it better.

Then comes Easter. What does Easter mean? It means the stone is rolled away, and that tomb is empty.

We may be concerned about money; worried, constantly anxious about money. It's like a hum in our head that is there all the time. A preoccupation with our income or assets not being near what they need to be to meet all our obligations.

We know that partly our situation comes from bad choices we have made on our own, which we can't stop kicking ourselves for. Or maybe we think it comes from injustices done to us by others, which produces an anger that is there just beneath the surface, ready to come out in very unpleasant ways.

But then comes Easter. What does Easter mean? It means the stone is rolled away, and that tomb is empty.

Maybe we look outside ourselves, and we see injustice all around. Of course we see poverty and fear and oppression. But now it is more than that:--we see a kind of pervasive wrongness going out of control:--immorality and meanness, lots of meanness, and corruption and dishonesty. This wrongness is organized and resolute and very, very forceful, and we are discouraged by our inability to do much about it.

Then comes Easter. What does Easter mean? It means the stone is rolled away, and that tomb is empty.

Easter is the most blessed event in history. It brings new life to those who believe. That is what it brought the disciples in that house with the doors locked. It means that good triumphs over evil; it means that life triumphs over death. It means the stone is rolled away, and all our tombs are empty.

God be praised. Love your neighbor. Amen.

