

Homily: Easter Vigil & Easter Sunday 2015
“The Gift of New Life in Christ”

1. **Tonight (today) is a day of great rejoicing.** Why? Jesus has won the victory over satan, sin and death by rising from the dead! Do we really believe this? Or do we doubt this on some level? For, as St. Paul says in his letter to the Corinthians (chapter 15), “*If Christ has not been raised, then our entire Christian faith is in vain and we are the most foolish of men.*” **But He is raised! Alleluia!** And so everything He has said and taught is true! It is the message of salvation for the human race, on earth and in eternity. **Thank you Jesus!** And have mercy us.
2. **Now it is up to us, who are still on our earthly pilgrimage, to respond to Him with greater love.** As St. Paul says in the Easter Sunday readings, “*If you were raised with Christ (in the Sacrament of **Baptism**), seek what is above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Think of what is above, not of what is on earth. For you have died (in **Baptism**), and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ your life appears, then you too will appear with Him in glory.*” What is St. Paul saying? He is telling us for the Resurrected life of Christ to take effect in our lives - we must allow God to change us. We have to be willing to focus on **the things of God** now: *growing in Christian virtue, goodness, truth and holiness and growing in union with the Lord Jesus in our souls in prayer, and **reject** the passing values of this world: being skeptical about God and the things of God, being self-willed, proud and stubborn.* **Are we willing to change?** Pray the Lord increases our **Faith!** That we don’t simply live by our senses, but rather allow the Lord to give us the mind of Christ, so that we will live a new life hidden in Him!
3. **The rejoicing of the Resurrection must lead to spiritual transformation, to bear good fruit.** We have some good models to help us in this, namely, the Apostles: 11 out of the 12, with the exception of St. John the Evangelist who was there at the Cross with the Virgin Mary, bailed out on Jesus during His passion and death. Whatever the reason, their faith was not strong enough to withstand the pressure of sticking with Jesus through thick and thin. But **Jesus in His charity gave them another chance** after the Resurrection when He appeared to them and

called them to **conversion**. Think of **Peter** and the 3 times Jesus asked Peter if he loved Jesus to make up for his three denials of knowing Jesus the night of Holy Thursday (see John 21:15-19). Think of **Thomas** who said he would never believe unless he put his hands in the nail-marks of Jesus's flesh, and then Jesus appeared and gave him that opportunity to turn away from unbelief to faith (see John 20:24-29). Similarly this is a **moment of visitation** for all of us today from the Lord. **He is giving us also another chance, to follow Him more faithfully!** Some of us have denied the Lord in our lives in some **serious** ways. *Maybe we have not been coming to Mass regularly; maybe we have some big sins on our souls and need to make a good Confession in the Sacrament of Reconciliation before we come up for Holy Communion; maybe we are being sexually intimate or living with someone without being married; maybe we deny the Lord and the teaching of our faith in different ways.* **Whatever it is, God is calling us to a new start today.** Some of us while not having consciously any big sins on our souls have denied the Lord in different ways: *not being as loving or forgiving as we could be with the people around us; not always speaking up for our Catholic faith in public settings; not praying enough, or being grateful enough for all the blessings God has bestowed on us in our lives, especially for the gift we celebrate today of Jesus victory over satan, sin and death.* **Do we sometimes take the Resurrection for granted? Or think it is too good to be true? We are all called by the Lord today to change for the better; let's do it with the help of His grace!** **Thank you Jesus** for going through your bitter Passion and Death **for us**; for giving **us** the opportunity for new life, in you, in your Glorious Resurrection; for the gift of your **Divine Mercy**, your healing and forgiving Love, in the Sacrament of Confession; for giving us your very life in Holy Communion. **Let none of this be in vain!** **May we respond to your Love and not let this Easter pass by without change.** Lord Jesus, shine Your face upon each and every one of us and draw us close to Your heart. The last 3 liturgical days have shown that You love each of us personally with a love beyond imagining; if we ever doubt this - may we look at the Crucifix and ponder the reality of the Resurrection! **What is our personal response to this reality of the Lord's love?** Have a blessed Easter.