

From The Pastor

Alleluia, He is risen. He who died has now been raised. Glory and praise to God, power and might, wisdom and strength, honor, glory and praise. Our lives are profoundly different now because of the death and Resurrection of Jesus. Thank you Lord God. All praise and glory to you.

What does the new life of the risen Christ look like in you? How is your life different because Jesus has been raised? In the immediate sense, I suppose one could assess the graces of Lent and a renewed closeness to the Lord. This can be a very perceptible awareness of the Lord's blessing, or a distinct sense of a new inner awareness of the presence of the Lord.

In a broader view, what active difference does it make for you to know and believe that Jesus has risen from the dead? This is a personal question and one that each of us must answer ourselves. For some the answer is going to be clear and obvious, while for others it is likely to be more subtle or even obscure. The point is for each of us to ponder our inner experience. We have spent forty days preparing for the grace of Easter. It only makes sense to attend to the blessing and new identity that is ours in this foundational feast.

It is by all accounts a fast weekend. Sometimes I wonder if people don't get stuck on Good Friday even as we celebrate Easter Sunday. If one is living in a painful or stressful time, Easter Sunday is not going to make all things well. Pains and stresses may remain, but the surpassing power of grace should instill a deep hope and trust that we share in the life of the Risen Christ.

The Exultant sung at the Vigil, Holy Saturday evening, powerfully proclaims the hope and liberation of the Risen One. 'What good would life have been to us had Christ not come as our Redeemer. Father, how wonderful your care for us. How boundless your merciful love. To ransom a slave you gave away your Son'. 'O happy fault, O necessary sin of Adam, which gained for us so great a Redeemer.'

This ancient hymn of acclamation and praise never fails to stir the heart. Indeed, what would our lives be without the redemption gained by Christ Jesus? What peace could be found in this life? What purpose would give direction and meaning to our lives without the goal and the hope of God's life? Without the redemption of Christ, we would have no life in God.

Now, in the larger sense, what does the Resurrection of Jesus look like to you? It may be hard to name a specific grace or insight, but there should be some deep sense of love, acceptance, and gratitude when we consider our lives now in Christ Jesus.

The Resurrection is the absolute affirmation of all we are in God. In Christ, we have died to sin and now find new life in him by the power of the Holy Spirit. We have a second chance that never runs out. Sin still burdens our lives, but we do not need to surrender to its power. The power of sin and death has been made null and void by the power of divine mercy in the personal love of Jesus.

As a baptismal season, Lent\Easter is focused on a renewed profession of faith Easter Sunday. This is another opportunity to speak with clarity and depth our commitment of faith in Jesus Christ. Do you reject sin? Yes, I do. Do you reject the deception of evil and refuse to give yourself over to sin? Yes, I do. Do you reject Satan? Yes, I do. And all his empty promise? Yes, I do. As you read these words, realize what you are doing. You are claiming yourself as a person of light who refuses darkness and claims an identity in love. You are aligning yourself with God in Christ. This is new life.

Despite the fact that you and I will fail again, we can surrender to the surpassing power of Christ and go forward with forgiveness. The strength to resist sin comes from faith and love for God, rooted in deep gratitude for the love God has for us. So our profession continues: Do you believe in God, who created you and gave you life? Yes, I do. Do you believe in Jesus Christ, who is the Son of God and Lord of your life? Yes, I do. Do you believe in the Holy Spirit who is the love of God, who lives in you, and who brings you to Jesus? Yes, I do.

This is our faith. We are proud to profess it in Jesus, our Lord. The power of the Resurrection comes in knowing our faith. Knowing what we believe and claim in Christ reveals and inspires the conversion of our minds and hearts to him. The Holy Spirit, the power of divine love is the transformation of our lives from sin to self-giving, from fear and discouragement to hope and power. However weak or broken, or uninspired our lives may feel emotionally, the transforming power of the Resurrection is at work in us. Do not be afraid or discouraged. The day may look or feel like a Good Friday, but there is no denying the love of God and the surpassing power of Jesus risen from the dead. You are alive in Christ, and Christ is alive in you. Rejoice, your life in God is secure.

Have a wonderful Easter
Father John Esper