

## HOMILY - EASTER SUNDAY [B]

[Starting Over]

First, let me begin by wishing all of you, visitors and parishioners, a very happy and blessed **Easter!** We are so happy to be sharing Easter joy with you in our newly renovated church interior! With Easter, we leave behind the discipline of Lent and move into the Easter season, which lasts until Pentecost Sunday, this year on May 20. What is Easter all about? Some years ago, I was walking through a shopping mall a few days before Easter Sunday. I was behind a Mom and her young son. We passed by a Hallmark store with a sign for Easter cards, and I heard her say to her son, *Oh that's right, we still have some things to get ready for Easter.* Her son looked up at her and asked – *does that mean I get a chocolate Easter bunny?*

Is Easter just a blip on our cultural map today? Has the grass of the Easter basket replaced the empty tomb? I suggest that in a world like ours today – torn by division, anger and violence, we need the truth of Easter more than ever. But maybe we need a slightly different view of Easter in today's world.

I am not suggesting any secularization of Easter. After all, the Resurrection of Jesus is the central core of our Christian faith. Instead, what if we looked at Easter as it is – a rebirth – a new beginning? In our society, we all are expected to make New Year's resolutions and start afresh each Jan. 1. It is the start of another calendar year, and we are urged to eat healthier, exercise more, etc. Well, what if we saw Easter that way? Only instead of worldly "re-dos," we look at Easter as a time for a spiritual "re-do?"

I would venture a guess that most of us, during our lives, have come to a point where we needed a new outlook – a fresh take on things, because the old way was no longer working so well. I remember a coffee mug I saw in a gift shop. On the side of the mug it said: *This is not the life I ordered.*

How do we remake ourselves? How can we bring the beauty of Easter into our lives every day? We need to start over – we need to reinvent ourselves, only this time, we need the strongest power in the world – the one that will never let us down. We need God.

If this sounds interesting to you – if you feel like you could use a little of that *super* power in your life, then there are two things to do. The first one is to resolve to let go of whatever bars us from being kinder, more forgiving and more patient. The second thing is to take the courageous step of trusting your life to God – the one who will always love us and will never leave us.

That first step, of removing barriers to being kind, patient and forgiving, seems a bit daunting at first. It may mean we restrict our use of social media, so that we don't spread unkind things about others. It may look like someone else could take advantage of us, mock us or even harm us. Sound familiar? It is what our Lord submitted to. Jesus seemed to have a key motto that we should try to remember – it is that love always wins out over anger or hatred. Kindness, mercy and patience all help us to remake ourselves into a person who has a certain peace – a peace the world cannot give.

Wouldn't it be great to have a sense that no matter what happens to me, the Lord God is with me, helping and guiding me? Wouldn't it be wonderful if could, bit by bit, let go of our need to always be right – to be safe – to be in control? Wouldn't it be good if we could remain silent when attacked by others – secure in the knowledge that this is what Jesus did, and look at the peace he had?

St. Basil the Great, a wise Greek bishop of the fourth century wrote: *If we wish to reverse or change the direction of our lives, there must a pause or loss to mark the end of one life and the beginning of another.*

I think that most of us can recall a time of loss or suffering in our lives. It was a time when we felt lost or isolated. Old ways of dealing with issues were not working, and then came that big setback. If that time was some time ago now, we may be given the grace of looking back. And if we look with honest eyes, we may see that, with the help of the Good God, we came out all right. We likely never would have believed it at that time, but when it is all said and done, we typically are in a better place than we were before the change.

Easter is a time for rebirth – a time to move towards being the human we want to be – not the one whose button is easily pushed by others. This leads us to the second element, the key to it all. That is, to learn to trust our lives, our daily plans and our future to God.

You may be thinking – all well and good, but when I get back to my job, or the issues in my family, I can easily get off track and revert to the old ways. Here is where the going gets easier. Trusting in God, as deeply as Jesus did, does not mean we must become a hermit, or be on our knees praying every hour. Instead, it means sincerely asking God for help and guidance each day, and then letting God help and guide us.

So often we humans want to tell God how to do his job. We present a list of what we think we need to be happy, and then when our list does not happen, we turn away from God, stop going to church and once again, get caught up in the whirlpool of modern society. Is that what we really want? Why do we think God will give us eternity if we do not give time here to God?

Trusting completely in God means letting God be God. What did our Lord tell us in his Sermon on the Mount? He said that we are not to worry over our lives, or what we will eat or wear or do the next day. He asked: *Can any of you by worrying add a single moment to your life span?* Instead, we need the courage to wait. God knows our needs. An example here would be a young child at dinner time. The child *wants* matches to play with, but it *needs* food for nurturing. As a parent, would we give the child matches just because he asked for them – or, would we say it's time to eat, and give him good food?

It's like that with God. God knows best what we need. Our job is to ask in trust for God to help us and provide for us. Then it is God's job to do so. And God will do so, if we can only wait in joyful hope for God to bless us. If we try to remake ourselves following these two steps, we can come to a new life that gives us light in darkness and peace in our lives.

This Easter, let's look at remaking ourselves into the person we want to be – the one who lives in trust and hope. Let's start over with the tools of forgiveness, kindness and humility, and then let God give us his blessings.

***Take a new path – it is what Easter is all about!***