

Happy Easter everyone. Alleluia! **He is risen!**

What a great day this is --- a day on which we gather to **worship, pray, make new disciples and give thanks** for the wonders our God has done for us, and continues to do --- every day, every second, every moment of our lives.

Our hearts are filled with joy and gratitude for the **immense love God has for us**, and in a particular way for the degree to which that love was displayed in a profound way by the **saving acts of our Lord Jesus**. What a God we have! And that's why we can't help but shout, "Alleluia!"

As you know, **kids ask a lot of questions**. That's one of the things we **love** about them. And it's also one of the things that can drive us **crazy** at times. Am I right? They just seem so interested in just about everything --- and not just the "what" but the "why" and the "how". Children are just so incredibly inquisitive as I am sure Jane and Rylee are tonight as they wait to enter the waters of Baptism and become children of God. We know that they and all children can really ask some doozie questions, can't they? And on top of that --- they want answers.

**Real answers.**

So we, the adults, try our best to give them answers that they will understand and that are age appropriate. But sometimes, that's not enough. Or sometimes we have no idea, and are a little embarrassed to admit it. (What? We don't know everything?) And so sometimes when a child presses hard to know something we don't know, we simply respond with those magic words,

**It's a mystery!** Well, I'm sorry to say --- no, I'm actually happy to say --- I'm going to **do that very same thing** to all of you this very night. What's Easter all about, you ask?

It's a mystery!

And I do so not as a cop-out, not to try to be evasive or to avoid a complicated question, not to try to get you to stop asking the question --- but rather because (in faith) we believe that it is the **real answer**, the true answer, the profound answer to a deep question.

What's Easter about?

It's a mystery --- rather, it's **THE MYSTERY**, what we call the **Paschal Mystery**,

the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus. And I don't mean to imply that the "meaning" of Easter is something that can be dismissed easily or **summed up in just a few words**. The question I asked doesn't really have an "answer" in the way that we commonly use that word.

Rather, the "meaning" of Easter, what we celebrate this day, is something so incredible, so unlike anything else, that we simply **don't have words that can do it justice**. "Mystery" will have to do. It would be wrong of me to stand here tonight and claim to "understand" this great mystery. I think that any person who is being honest with him or herself would have to agree that what we are celebrating today is **hard to get our minds around**, hard to "figure out".

Our God did what? He became one of us and then he did what? And after that, what happened? There is not a more **extraordinary story** that could be told. And yet, this is no "story". This is the **greatest display of God's profound love for us** --- a God who chose to break into our world, walk our journey, and lay down his life for us.

And in doing so (in ways far beyond our ability to comprehend) he **redeemed the world** --- took every **hurt**, every **pain**, everything that is **broken** within us, every **sin**, even **death itself** --- and rendered them **powerless** in the face of his unyielding love, a love that has no conditions and no bounds.

How? Who knows? In faith we simply believe that God's way is always the best way. But why? Why would God choose to do this?

Well, simply, because **he loves us** --- not a little, not sometimes --- but always, relentlessly, eternally. And so we shouldn't spend all our time trying to "understand" or "figure out" how this mystery could be true or how it is possible. We might simply drive ourselves crazy trying to do so.

Rather, the Paschal Mystery --- the death and resurrection of Jesus --- is something God invites us to accept, embrace, in a very real sense, **ENTER INTO**. This is a mystery that we don't simply look at from the outside, but rather take to heart, allowing the power of Jesus' resurrection transform us into the beautiful people God created us to be.

And that's why we **rejoice** this day.

That's why we shout "**Alleluia!**" What could be greater than knowing deeply in our hearts the incredible depth of God's love? Think about the person in this world you love the most. **God loves you more**. Way more. Infinitely more. Imagine that.

And yet, there is one more thing to embrace tonight, one more thing to be grateful for

--- something we often fail to connect with this day. You see, in faith, we don't believe that this mystery **only** has meaning for the **end of our lives**, a mystery that we have to wait a lifetime to experience. Rather, the Paschal Mystery is something that can **give hope to every cross we face in this life . . .**

. . . every pain  
. . . every sorrow  
. . . every struggle  
. . . every disappointment  
. . . every broken heart  
. . . every illness.

My friends --- not one of these things, not one of these crosses gets the last word. They **no longer have lasting power over us**. They don't win. **God wins**. The power of Jesus' death and resurrection wins. The **love** of our God, which is beyond all understanding, **wins**. And that means that for every one of our Good Fridays, for every one of our crosses. There can be an Easter Sunday, a day of resurrection --- a day when our **hearts and spirits and souls are made whole once again** --- once again resting peacefully in the arms of a God who loves us more than we can imagine --- today, tomorrow, next week, and into eternity.

That's the Paschal Mystery. And that's why we rejoice.

That's why we shout, "He is risen! Alleluia!" May this Easter, and the promises revealed in this sacred mystery, fill your hearts with true **peace**, true **hope**, and true **joy**. God wants that for us. And that's no mystery.