

**EASTER VIGIL/ SUNDAY; March 31<sup>st</sup> 2024; Cycle – B**  
**Acts 10:34a, 37-43; Colossians 3:1-4; John 20:1-9**

Dear Sisters & Brothers,

According to a survey it is said that 66% of Americans believe in the Resurrection of Jesus; 20% disagree and 14% are unsure. Among the 34% of non-believers many believe that Jesus' resurrection is a myth or legend. The non-Christians, though believe in the death of Jesus on the Cross do not admit that Jesus was risen from the dead. They appreciate Jesus for the very reason that he sacrificed his very life for his good principles and moral teachings. He had to die for he raised voice against the then social evils. Of course, those who are determined not to believe in the resurrection cannot be convinced with any sort of evidence. On the other hand for those who believe in the reality of resurrection have abundant of evidences in the Scripture.

The utter confusion and chaos among the apostles which started with the arrest and death of Jesus show that even none of them believed that Jesus would come back to life. Though Jesus predicted at least three times about his death and resurrection, they didn't strike their head at all. One thing was certain for them that the death of Jesus was the end of his life and untimely ending of their future too. They hid themselves in the upper room for fear of losing their dear lives. The pious women went to the tomb early in the morning only with the intention to anoint the body of Jesus according to the Jewish custom. As the Sabbath was about to begin before the burial of Jesus, they could not anoint his body. They never expected to see an empty tomb and the angel there at all. Initially, only the pious women received the evidence of the resurrection; but the apostles considered it as women's emotional story. In other words, their belief in the resurrection of Jesus was very challenging and slow. Even after witnessing the risen Lord more than once, they doubted. If the apostles had fabricated the resurrection theory they would not have added their confusion and doubt in the gospels; rather they would have presented it very convincingly. Finally, if they were all convinced of the resurrection of Jesus, no doubt something extraordinary and unexplainable happened on that Sunday.

**On Pentecost day Peter could boldly declare, “The author of life you put to death, but God raised this Jesus; of this we are all witness” (Acts 3:15).** St. Paul had no chance to meet Jesus while he was alive; no doubt, he heard of his crucifixion. On his way to Damascus to persecute the Christians there, he just heard the voice of Jesus and he believed that Jesus has risen from the dead. St. Paul says in **1Corinthians 15:14, “And if Christ has not been raised, then empty is**

**our preaching; empty, too, your faith.”** The entire teaching of St. Paul is centered on the truth, **‘Christ crucified and Christ risen.’** *This was the earliest proclamation of the Church, “Christ has died, Christ has risen and Christ will come again.”*

Once a preacher, while preaching on an Easter Sunday said, **“Today I am a Christian because over 2000 years ago a guy walked out of the tomb alive.”** Yes, had not that guy walked out of the tomb alive, today, there would not have been a religion existing in the world known as Christianity. If today, 2 billion men and women follow Jesus, then it is sure that the resurrection of Jesus is not simply a myth or legend. Today we do not believe in a historical figure who came once and disappeared for ever. We believe that even today Jesus is alive among us and he is the source of our own resurrection and eternal life. Only Jesus could declare, **“I am the resurrection and the life; whoever believes in me, even if he dies, will live and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die” (John 11:25).**

It is very unfortunate, despite all these evidences available in Scripture, still Christianity and Christ are attacked by enemies. The attack on Christianity started from the very first century, exactly speaking, immediately after the first Pentecostal speech of Peter. The first attack came from the Jewish Sanhedrin in the form of the arrest of Peter and his fellow disciples. Later it was extended by the Roman Imperialism and the persecution continued for another three more centuries. Can you imagine, the great Roman power coming down upon a young community and persecuting it for three centuries! But all those Emperors perished and disappeared in the pages of history, but still Christianity continued to survive and spread. It is a clear that Jesus is alive among his followers. If you go to any corner of the world, there you will find Christians. But Christianity and Christ are under attack always. In the modern age, besides the physical attacks on Christians, the media attack against Christ and Christian doctrines is intensifying. **But no evil power can prevail over Jesus and his Church. Jesus lived; died but rose again and he will continue to live in the world. The assurance of Jesus to his apostles, “And behold I am with you always, until the end of the age” (Mt 28:20) cannot be an empty promise.**