

## EASTER VIGIL & EASTER SUNDAY; April 20<sup>th</sup> 2025

Dear Sisters & Brothers,

On Good Friday millions of people all over the world participated in the Passion liturgy with *joy*, not with sorrow, for they knew that the gloom of that Friday will be turned into a Sunday of rejoicing. Though on Friday the Church looked to be very barren due to empty tabernacle, stripped altar and lack of sanctuary candle, we knew for sure that on Saturday evening the very Church would be filled with flowers and candles as we see now, to welcome the risen Lord. Even the very literal meaning of **Easter is - “Feast of fresh flowers.”** But over 2000 years ago the disciples, the Blessed Mother and the pious women never witnessed the crucifixion with the same feeling which we had on Good Friday.

The incidents of disciples fleeing at the arrest of Jesus, the denial of Peter to admit that he was one of Jesus’ disciples, the desperate end of Judas Iscariot, the wailing of the pious women including Mother Mary at the foot of the cross, speak loudly that none of them had even the slightest belief that Jesus would rise from the dead on the third day. They were sure that the death of Jesus was the end of everything. According to the synoptic gospels, none of the disciples followed Jesus on his way to Calvary nor did they stand under the cross. Only a handful of pious women were there with him till the end. But according to John’s gospel John was the only disciple who stood at the foot of the cross with Mother Mary and the pious women. Again according to the accounts of the synoptic gospels, after the Sabbath the women arrived at the tomb with spices just to anoint the body of Jesus properly, which they could not do due to the beginning of Sabbath. As John’s gospel says, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb alone just to weep over. In short, they didn’t have even the wildest imagination that Jesus would be seen alive again. But the following of the events thereafter were unimaginable and amazing for them.

Even after seeing the risen Lord, the apostles initially doubted the reality of Resurrection and it didn’t give them much hope ahead. That is why after meeting the risen Lord three times, Peter decided to go back to his old career of fishing. (John 21). The great truth of resurrection sunk into the hearts of disciples very slowly. In other words only with the Pentecost they became mature in their faith and started speaking in open the great event of the Resurrection. Perhaps, St. Paul’s faith in the Resurrection of the Lord should be esteemed as he believed it firmly even without seeing the Risen Lord physically, but only heard his voice. But he believed strongly that Jesus rose from the dead. The whole teaching of Paul is centered on the death and Resurrection of Jesus. Paul accuses the unbelief of some of the Corinthians in the Resurrection of Jesus, in these

words, **“And if Christ has not been raised, then empty is our preaching; empty, too your faith.” (1 Cor. 15: 14).** Paul could see our resurrection in the light of the Resurrection of Jesus. In the same chapter in verses 16-18 Paul says, **“For if the dead are not raised, neither has Christ been raised, nor if Christ has not been raised, your faith is vain; you are still in your sins. Then those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished.”** As Paul sees, the Resurrection of Jesus gives us a taste of what our future will be in God. In the letter to the Romans Paul says, **“We were indeed buried with him through baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might live in newness of life.”**

During the long period of 2000 years the Church has been split into thousands of small fragments and the rules and regulations and authorities are varied from denominations to denominations. But amazingly enough, the basic belief that **“Christ has died, Christ is risen and Christ will come again”** remains the same in all churches which is the foundation or the very core of our faith. We will have life only if we believe in the Resurrection of Jesus. **Many founders of religions are dead and gone forever; but Jesus Christ lived, lives and will live till the end of the world.** In St. Matthew’s gospel the last words of Christ to his apostles were, **“And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age.” (Mt. 28:20b).** Only Jesus Christ could claim that. In all generations the Christians found their strength in Jesus in their adverse situations.

Your grandparents or great grandparents landed in this country without much in their hands. But they held dearly one slogan in their hearts, **“In God we trust”** and in their lives they always expressed the same. But unfortunately in the modern age, for majority of Christians Jesus is dead or they are least bothered about his existence. Even in our own country, for 75% of Christians Jesus is dead in their lives. They don’t have anything to do with him in their day today lives. Our world is in a chaos for Jesus is pushed out of our culture and families. In St. John’s gospel Jesus says very emphatically, **“Whoever remains in me and I in him will bear much fruit, because without me you can do nothing.” (Jn. 15: 5b).** And also John laments, ***“And this is the verdict, that the light came into the world but people preferred darkness to light, for their works were evil (Jn 3:19).*** In the Acts of the Apostles 4:12 St. Peter declares, **“There is no salvation through anyone else, nor is there any other name under heaven given to the human race by which we are to be saved”, but only the name of Jesus Christ.** It is the duty of we Christians to proclaim boldly, ‘Indeed Christ is risen; he is alive with us, Alleluia.’