

## Homily of Easter Sunday, Year A, 2026

Acts 10:3, 37-43; Psalm 118:1-2, 16-17, 22-23; Colossians 3:1-4; John 20:1-9

One of the explanations of the origin of the word 'Easter' is that the word derives from an Old English word, 'eostre,' referring to a spring festival, and an Old German word, 'eostarun,' relating to rising sun, east, or dawn. The Church adopted this term to represent the dawn of new life and the resurrection of Christ as the light of the world which is celebrated in spring season.

The Easter date is not set as that of Christmas. The Catholic Church has determined the date of Easter since 325 AD. In that year, the Council of Nicaea established that Easter be celebrated on the first Sunday after the first ecclesiastical full moon occurring on or after March 21. The Vatican Observatory Department astronomers provide the Easter date. Details of the department's work is not the focus of our reflection. However, it is essential that Easter is a spring season celebration after the dryness and withering of winter season. Trees and grasses are alive again. Vegetation wears a new look. Hibernated animals due to winter emerge from their hiding places. Many animals shed their skin in spring as they wake from winter, allowing for growth and removal of old, worn-out layers. Weather, trees, and animals have a lot to teach us about Easter. We are invited to be transformed to the new life of spring.

Easter is the greatest Christian celebration. It is celebrated for 50 days, from Easter Sunday to Pentecost Sunday. The 50 days period is called Eastertide. St. Paul tells us that Christianity is what it is because of the event of the resurrection. He writes in 1 Corinthians 15:14, "And if Christ has not been raised, then empty too is our preaching, empty too your faith."

At crucifixion and death, Jesus' mission appeared to have ended up in a failure. But as we read in today's gospel, "On the first day of the week, Mary of Magdala came to the tomb early in the morning, while it was still dark, and saw the stone removed from the tomb" (John 20:1). An angel of the Lord removed the stone that sealed Jesus' tomb (Matthew 28:2). Jesus was freed from the darkness of the tomb. Jesus' mission came alive again. From a few followers in Israel, Christianity is the world's largest religion that has influenced every aspect of human existence. The global population of Christians is over 2.6 billion, which is over 30% of the world population of about 8.3 billion.

St. Paul tells us in the second reading that the Easter event makes us people who are raised with Christ (Colossians 3:1). Jesus is no longer in the tomb. Let us not remain in the tomb of sin and sorrow. May the angel who removed the stone over Jesus's tomb remove every 'stone' that prevents us from being raised with Christ.

St. Paul encourages us in the second reading to be transformed by the Easter event to become a people who "think of what is above, not of what is on earth" (Colossians 3:3). This means that we think and act according to what is pleasing to God, as St. Paul states in

Philippians 4:8, “whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.”

St. Paul, further, instructs us to hide our life with Christ in God (Colossians 3:3). In this world of violence, trials, and temptations, we must hide our life with Christ in God to be guided, protected, and defended from the onslaught of this world, the Evil One, and his agents.

St. Peter exclaims, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who in his great mercy gave us a new birth to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (1 Peter 1:3). We are to become what St. Augustine calls “Easter people.” He says, “We are Easter people, and Alleluia is our song.” Pope St. John Paul II adds, “The joy of Easter should not be a shallow joy, but rather a joy that comes from faith, that grows through unselfish love, that respects the fundamental duty of love of neighbor, without which it would be unbecoming to speak of Joy. ... An Easter person constantly reflects and asks himself or herself two important questions, ‘How can I become Jesus to my neighbor?’ and ‘How can others see Jesus in Me?’”

Jesus’ resurrection followed his passion, cross, crucifixion, and death. Therefore, the resurrection story is a story of hope. We are not to give up in times of passions, crosses, crucifixions, and deaths but to look forward to resurrection and glory that follow. May our thorns turn to crowns. May our crosses turn to thanksgiving testimonies. May the angels of God roll away the stones weighing on us so that we may spring forth to new life. We pray with the words of St. Paul: May the Spirit of the one who raised Jesus from the dead give life to our mortal bodies also (Romans 8:11). Amen.

Happy and Spirit-filled Easter to you all!

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