

In the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Christ is risen! Alleluia!

Tonight, we celebrate the most important event in the history of the world. It is the dramatic conclusion to the greatest act of love ever performed. God loved the world *so* much that He sent His only begotten Son to *die* for our sins BUT—in a dramatic twist—He *raised* Christ *from the dead!* We don't think about that enough or pray about it enough—we don't let it sink in. When was the last time that *you* saw a man rise from the dead—a person who died, actually get up and live again?! It's stunning! It's unbelievable! It can't be true, right? BUT IT IS! And because it is, we are called to enter more deeply into it.

On that first day of the week, over two millennia ago, the women went to Christ's tomb with their biggest concern being who would roll back the stone. They fully expected to find a dead body to be present in that tomb as is evidenced by the fact that they went to anoint the body of our Lord. But, they were met by angels who asked them a question, "Why do you seek the Living One among the dead?" That is a powerful question. Why *did* they go? Christ told them to expect Him to rise on the third day, after all! They either forgot or didn't believe Him! Either way, the full shock of His promise never fully sank in and I imagine that they were pretty startled by the question and embarrassed. "Didn't you believe? Why *do* you seek the Living One among the dead?" The same is true of us! How many times have we heard the good news of Easter? How many times have we walked away as if He really didn't rise from the dead? Sometimes, by our actions and the way we treat our spiritual lives, we can behave as if Christ is

somehow not *ALIVE* right now. You see, He didn't die and rise and then die again! So why do we have a tendency to put Christ back into the tomb—into His nice and neat little religion box to take Him out when we go to Mass or when we need Him? Why is He treated as if He weren't *fully alive* right here and right now? *Christ not only rose from the dead 2 millennia ago, but HE IS ALIVE NOW!* Do we realize this? Do we live like this? If all of this is true, then shouldn't it change *everything*? Doesn't it mean that we owe God something more than half-hearted efforts? Doesn't it mean that we owe God a great deal of effort and energy so that we can grow in holiness? Doesn't it mean that we should be unwavering in trust of His plan?

The Easter Vigil reminds us that we are called to pass over from death to new life in the Risen Christ who is alive, here and now! The Easter Candle, lit during this Vigil, reminds us of this. It is the single light amidst a sea of darkness—the glimmer of hope that pierces through the stifling shadows and then spreads because it is contagious! We are called to pass from the darkness of sin and into the light of Christ. On the day of our own Baptism, our parents and godparents lit our baptismal candle from the Easter candle. The priest said, “Receive the light of Christ,” and entrusted that light of faith to our parents in a solemn duty and obligation. He commanded them to do all that they could to keep that light burning brightly and to ensure that the flame of faith is kept alive in our hearts. Tonight, we renew that flame. Christ, the light of the world, has come and conquered death and the kingdom of darkness and as we all lit our candles from the flame of the Easter candle, so Christ wants to light us aflame again as well.

We need to ask ourselves whether or not Christ finds this flame still burning within us. It isn't enough to simply say that it is. Even our presence in the Church tonight isn't enough to convince Christ of that fact! Fire consumes and envelops; it spreads. If our faith doesn't consume us—if it doesn't pervade every single aspect of who we are—it isn't burning; it's going out. Christ said in the Gospel, "I came to set the world on fire; how I wish it were already burning." That's His whole mission—to set the world ablaze! He wants *us* to be living candles, burning with love for God and love for others, and a zeal for holiness—the zeal that comes from the *fact* that God really did destroy death; that Jesus Christ really is alive after having died and being buried in the tomb for three days! That *fact* should burn within us!

And tonight, Christ rejoices at the fact that several new candles are being added to the world as we fully initiate several new souls into the Holy Catholic Church, the true ark of salvation! Some of you will receive Baptism tonight in which God will truly spark the flame of faith in your hearts, wipe away the stains of original sin, and welcome you into His Church. Some will receive Confirmation and receive the outpouring of the Holy Spirit as the Apostles did at Pentecost, enlivening you with burning zeal from the hope that stems from this night's defeat of Satan and death. And then you will worthily receive the Holy Eucharist for the first time tonight!

The Precious Body and Blood of our Savior, crucified and mangled upon the Cross on Good Friday and now, risen from the dead and in glory—comes to you; you—weak, insignificant, tiny you—in an act of unmitigated love! What wondrous love is this?! *Never, never* let this

Most Blessed of Sacraments become routine. Remember in awe this sacred night in which our Savior rose from the dead to snatch you from death by nourishing *you* with His very flesh as food! There is enough in that simple statement to reflect upon and pray with for lifetimes upon lifetimes!

Why do you seek the Living One among the dead? Today, we come not just to mark the memory of a past event. We come to seek Christ *who is alive!!* And we find Him here in these Sacraments! Let us awaken to the reality of this awesome moment! Let it kindle us with the fire of love and hope because if Christ can get up out of the grave, what have we to fear? What have we to hold us back? Stop acting as if Christ is still in the tomb! Live as if He were fully alive—because HE IS! Seek Him in the life of the Sacraments and let them refashion you into His Sacred Image so that we too may be found among the living, and not the dead!