

Is it Easter for you yet? Is it still Easter for you?

The Church proclaims Alleluia, Jesus is risen. He is risen indeed, Alleluia.

But for lots of folks, Easter never happened. And for many others, Easter joy slipped away as quickly as it appeared.

On Easter Sunday, this small church was packed to overflowing with worshippers singing “Alleluia, He is risen. He is alive!”

But by Monday, right here in our midst, death threatened to suffocate those joyful songs. A 65-year-old man died suddenly of a heart attack. An 18-year-old girl who had been baptized in this church, and whose grandparents still live here, was killed in a car crash. The mother of a choir member died. And of course, Pope Francis.

For some of us it is not the first day of the new week. It's the last day of the old week, and Jesus is still in the tomb. For others, he's risen, but has already disappeared.

Yes, we rejoice that Christ is indeed risen.

But many in our midst are still pilgrims; many still have the path of faith to travel.

Too many are much more keenly aware of death and futility in their human lives than of the glory of the life that is indestructible and eternal.

Many feel exhausted and spent under the burden of every-day toils and disappointments.

Others still find life bittersweet, when they remember those whom they've had to surrender to the grave.

This was the plight of Thomas in today's Gospel.

Easter hadn't happened for him.

All the other disciples, his friends, were rejoicing, for they had met the Lord, who had forgiven them and brought them back into the circle of God's friendship.

They had sat at table again with Jesus and spoken with him, shared the meal with him; and they rejoiced and were glad. It was Easter for them, both that first Sunday night and every day after it.

But Easter hadn't happened for Thomas. He was still weighed down with his fear and his guilt, his sadness and his doubts.

Thomas didn't know if Jesus had risen. But he was sure Jesus had died. For something of himself had died too.

He had defiantly proclaimed, "Unless I touch his side and put my finger in the nail marks, I will never believe."

Thomas knew about wounds. His own heart was broken.

So, the Lord asked Thomas to touch his wounds---touch the one place Thomas was sure of.

Jesus extends that same invitation to us this day.

If you are unsure about His resurrection,

if you don't know whether you can trust the Lord,

if you carry the burdens of grief and loss and fear and a loneliness, then reach out and touch his wounds where Jesus still suffers, in his poor and broken hearted ones.

Some of them are in Ukraine. Some of them are in Sudan. Some may be sitting right next to you.

Try to be gentle and considerate to one another. Try to look up from your preoccupation with your own worries and be present to someone else who is carrying some of those wounds.

And in the process, let Jesus touch your wounds. Let him into your struggles, with doubt or fear or guilt or loneliness or physical pain or grief. Jesus has borne each of those wounds so that you don't have to be alone with yours.

Be with Christ in prayer, and ask him to touch your wounds so that you can know that he really is risen, really is alive.

We all bear the marks of the crucified Lord. But we also have been brought to life again by the risen Lord, who pours out His Spirit upon us and nourishes us with His Word, His Body and Blood, His circle of friends, the community of his disciples.

Be Christ's hands for each other, as you tend to one another's wounds; and let Christ's hands, stretched out to you through one another, strengthen and heal you each day. And as we carry, and are carried by, one another, Easter will arrive here too, just as it came to Thomas. And all of us will finally be able to sing out with joy, Alleluia, He is risen indeed.

And the people of God said Amen.

For the rite of acceptance into the catechumenate.

April 26 2025

The Rite of Acceptance into the Catechumenate, and the witness of Keira and Darian, are much more powerful testimonies than any homily I could preach today, so I will confine myself to one observation.

This Friday evening, about 40 of our young adults will receive the sacrament of Confirmation. Last fall, I posed for them a question: Is Jesus alive or dead? If he's dead, then all this Church stuff is meaningless. But if He, who died, as Thomas in today's gospel so well knew, is now alive, then everything changes. As Pope Francis noted, just hours before his own death, dying is not the end of everything, but the start of something.

Death is not the extinguishing of existence, but the portal to an entirely new way of being. And so all of human life, including suffering and sin, as well as laughter and love, are now shot through with grace. Everything can disclose the presence of the Divine, if we are willing to pay attention.

Keira and Darian, and Keira's brother Liam, who will make his first communion today, have begun to touch that mystery of life in the Risen Lord. They will continue to share the scriptures and prayer and the personal witness of their companions on this journey. They will deepen in their own personal encounters with the Living Lord. That's why they are here today, why they stand in our midst, and ask us to accompany them on this journey.

They have begun to know that their deepest desire has always been for real friendship with the Lord Jesus, because the Lord planted in their hearts his own desire for friendship with them.

If we really meant what we said at the start of this liturgy, that we will be their companions on this journey of faith, then we commit ourselves to nurturing ever more deeply our own friendship with Jesus, through praying, delving into the scriptures, celebrating the Eucharist, and always giving thanks to the Lord for his abundant blessings of the love of family and friends and church, and for the beauty of nature.

We will model Christian discipleship  
for Keira and Darien, and for Liam,  
and for Connor, Rowan and Benji, who received first  
Eucharist on Holy Thursday, and Grey who will do so tomorrow,  
and for all those to be confirmed on Friday,  
and for those who will make first communion in May—  
We will model for them the Christ-life,  
by serving those in need, and respecting the dignity of each  
person,  
by offering our own gifts to build up the Body of Christ;  
by sharing our own stories that witness to the truth that Jesus  
Christ is indeed risen and dwells here in our midst.

For here, God weaves together our stories with the stories of Keira and Darian, and of our first communicants and our confirmandi, into the never-ending story of God's ever-faithful love. And the people of God said, Amen.