



**Seeking the Things That Are Above: Living Easter at the Time of Covid-19**

Fr. Roger J. Landry • UNSRC Catholic Club • April 15, 2020





## The Long Lent of 2020

- This Easter has been a long-time coming.
- Few would have foreseen on Ash Wednesday that:
  - Our fast would become an involuntary one from the Living Bread
  - Our almsgiving would feature social distancing from those in need
  - Our prayer would occur mostly in the domestic church and cyberspace
  - We would have an extended meditation on how we are dust and unto dust shall return without knowing the day or the hour
  - We would be led into the desert, separated from the distractions of sports, late night shows, parties, outside commitments, even face-to-face contact with friends and family.
  - We would be wondering, like Mary Magdalene, who would roll away the stones from our Churches, tabernacles and confessionals



## Nevertheless a Good Preparation!

- If Lent is meant to prepare us for Easter – not just what it symbolizes but the death-and-life reality it effects – then this Lent might prove to be, for all its vicissitudes and sufferings, one of the most spiritually fruitful of our life.
- This year in particular we know we need Easter!
- And not the Easter of egg hunts and chocolate!
- We know we need the risen Christ.





## The Paschal Metamorphosis

- St. Paul tells us — which we hear during the Easter Vigil — “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*. ... Consequently, you too must think of yourselves as [being] dead to sin and *living for God in Christ Jesus*.”
- There was a dramatic change in the life of the first apostles, Mary Magdalene, the disciples of Emmaus on the day Jesus rose from the dead, turning their lives right-side-up. The living memorial of Christ’s resurrection should similarly change us. It should lead to newness of life.
- How should the reality of Easter change us, in general and during the time of Covid-19?
- I would like to consider ten different ways we can think about this change.



# Faith

- St. John, “He saw and believed.”
- Jesus to St. Thomas: “Blessed are those who have not seen but believe.”
- Faith is a belief in something (*fides quae*) on the basis of a trust in someone (*fides qua*).
- It’s not just faith in an event — Jesus’ resurrection — but, more importantly, trust in Jesus who predicted and fulfilled his promise to rise on the third day.
  - Faith in the event: empty tomb, appearances, credible proclamation.
  - Faith in the person: this was the fulfillment of the sign of Jonah!





# Conversion

- Peter called the people to conversion when they asked “What are we to do?” “Repent and be baptized ... for the forgiveness of your sins” (Acts 2:37-38)
- Jesus founded the Sacrament of Penance on Easter Sunday evening (Jn 20).
- Parable of the Prodigal Son teaches us that every reconciliation is supposed to be a resurrection: “My son was *dead* and has been *brought to life again*.”
- Conversion is not about a minor course correction in our life or the eradication of a sinful habit. It’s about a death and resurrection. *It’s about a new life.*
- Divine Mercy Sunday is for a reason the culmination of the Easter octave!



## Sursum Corda Effect

- We hear from St. Paul on Easter morning: “If you were raised with Christ, *seek what is above*, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. *Think of what is above*, not of what is on earth, for you have died, and *your life is hidden with Christ in God*” (Col 3:1-3).
- The resurrection lifts us from obsessing about worldly things and helps us to view everything increasingly from God’s perspective. We place our treasure in God and our heart goes to where our treasure is (Mt 6:21).
- “Lift up your hearts”: This means we prioritize prayer, worship, Sacred Scripture, adult educational resources, charity, especially as present restrictions make us ever more “hidden with Christ in God.”





## Presence of God

- Risen from the dead, Jesus is no longer bound by the limits of the humanity he assumed. He can be with us always.
- Even if we are socially isolated, even if we might be solitarily hooked up to a ventilator, we are not alone.
  - The same risen Jesus who walked through the closed doors of the Upper Room can traverse the doors of our apartment or the most highly guarded hospital quarantines
- He wants to accompany us like he accompanied the disciples on the Road to Emmaus, to join our conversation and make our hearts burn by relating present events to what God has revealed.
- He is very much alive and with us, as Pope Francis says, “living at your side every day to enlighten, strengthen and free you” (EG 164).





## Joy

- “While [the disciples] were still incredulous for joy and were amazed...” (Lk 24:41).
- Joy is meant to be our fundamental response to the reality of Easter.
  - “This is the day the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it!” (Ps 118:24)
  - *Exultet*: “Let this holy building shake with joy!” *The Strife is O’er*: “Let us swell the joyful strain.” Easter season is an ode to joy!
  - Eucharistic preface: “Overcome with paschal joy...”
- Bloy: “Joy is the most infallible sign of God’s presence.”



## Charity

- Jesus' dialogue with Simon Peter after the Resurrection: "Simon, son of John, do you love me?"
- After Peter's affirmative response, Jesus says, "Feed my sheep. ... Feed my lambs. ... Tend my sheep." Peter's love for Jesus would be shown in his care for the Good Shepherd's sheep and lambs.
- Jesus didn't say, "Love *me* as I have loved you." Rather: "Love *one another* as I have loved you."
- Love is sacrifice. It's a willingness to die for the sake of others. The resurrection helps us to see that when we give our lives for others we don't lose our lives, but gain it!





## Courage

- First disciples were totally changed by the Resurrection.
- They would not leave the Upper Room to betray and abandon Jesus, but to proclaim him.
- Even when those who had crucified Jesus had Peter and John *scourged* and commanded them never to speak again of Jesus, they continued, knowing that if Jesus were raised, so would they. This is what gives courage to the martyrs.
- Courage is not the lack of fear but of doing what we ought despite our fears. The risen Jesus says, “Be not afraid!”



## Vibrant Hope in Eternal Life

- Each of us can say with Job, “I know that my Redeemer lives!” (Job 19:25).
- Each of us can echo St. Paul, “Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting? ... God gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!” (1 Cor 15:55-57).
- At a time when many have been stung by the sudden death of those we know and love, we know that an imperishable crown awaits for those who believe, live and die in Christ (1 Cor 9:25).
- That’s why Christians “do not grieve like the rest who have no hope” (1 Thes 4:13). We know that God not only so loved the world that he gave his only Son that we might not perish, but raised his Son as the first fruits of those who have died (Jn 3:16; 1 Cor 15:20).
- The resurrection gives us that indomitable hope.





## Sharing the Faith

- Jesus risen from the dead gives us the commission to share that great news and what it means.
- To Mary Magdalene: “Go to my brothers and tell them, ‘I am going to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’”
- To the Apostles:
  - “...You are witnesses of these things.”
  - “All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the world.”
- Pope Francis: “What kind of love would not feel the need to speak of the beloved, to point him out, to make him known?” (EG 264).



## Life According to the Holy Spirit

- Jesus during the Last Supper:
  - “And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate *to be with you always*, the Spirit of truth.”
  - “The Advocate, the holy Spirit that the Father will send in my name — *he will teach you everything and remind you of all that [I] told you.*”
  - “When the Advocate comes whom I will send you from the Father, the Spirit of truth that proceeds from the Father, *he will testify to me. And you also testify*, because you have been with me from the beginning.”
  - “I tell you the truth, *it is better for you that I go*. For if I do not go, the Advocate will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you.”





## Life According to the Holy Spirit

- Jesus before the Ascension:
  - “I am sending the promise of my Father upon you; but stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.”
  - “He enjoined them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for ‘the promise of the Father about which you have heard me speak; for John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the holy Spirit.”
  - “You will receive power when the holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”
- Pentecost
  - Holy Spirit came as a “strong driving wind” and descended upon each of them as “tongues as of fire.”



## Life According to the Holy Spirit

- The Holy Spirit helps us:
  - **Grow in faith** (piety, gift of the Holy Spirit)
  - **Convert and live newness of life** (Sequence: “Cleanse that which is unclean, water that which is dry, heal that which is wounded. Bend that which is inflexible, fire that which is chilled, correct what goes astray”)
  - **Seek the things that are above** (Rom 8:5)
  - **Recognize God’s indwelling** (1 Cor 16:9)
  - **Burst with joy** (second fruit of the Holy Spirit, Gal 5:22)
  - **Love** (first fruit, Gal 5:22)
  - **Grow in Courage** (gift of the Holy Spirit, Is 11:2)
  - **Have vibrant hope in eternal life** (Rom 8:11: “If the Spirit of the one who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, the one who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also”)
  - **Share the Faith** (Acts 5:32: “We are witnesses of these things, as is the holy Spirit that God has given”)





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Welcome!

I warmly welcome you to this website, put together at the insistence and with the assistance of friends.

During my diaconal ordination, Cardinal Edmund Szoka gave me the following instruction from the Ordination Rite as together we gripped the Book of the Gospels:

*"Receive the Gospel of Christ, whose herald you now are.  
Believe what you read.  
Teach what you believe.  
Practice what you teach."*

Those words have never lost their resonance.

Since that day -- October 8, 1998 -- I have tried to live up to that commission to be a "herald of the Gospel," by striving to teach what the Church believes, to practice what I preach to others, and to spread with joy and enthusiasm the truth Christ has entrusted to His church -- in and out of season, in and out of the pulpit.

This website is a chronicle of those attempts.

It constitutes the "five loaves and two fish" (or even less!) that I have placed into the hands of the Lord as an attempt to feed a hungry crowd, confident that, if He wishes, He can multiply and supplement that meager offering to nourish many more (Jn 6:1-14).

In Christ,  
Fr. Roger J. Landry

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Questions and Discussion