

## THIS IS THE DAY EACH AND EVERY DAY (Jn 20:1-9)

Repeat after me: "This is the day / that the Lord has made / that the **Lord** has made. Let us rejoice / and be glad in it / and be glad in it. Alleluia! Alleluia!"  
(Do I dare sing and dance to this fact?)

This truly is the day which the Lord has made: the Son of God has risen from the dead, and because of that the world has been forever changed.

Today in our gospel we have been given the person of Mary of Magdala as a principal figure, so let's think about her for a moment and how she has been grieving the death of Jesus. She was there when he was whipped and beaten, when he carried the cross, and was at the foot of that cross when it was raised up, and she saw him die a horrible death. She has probably not stopped crying for the past two days and hadn't been able to sleep, so rather than lie in bed tossing and turning, she gets up early on Sunday morning and goes to the tomb of Jesus while it is still dark. Her eyes are probably red and swollen from all of the tears, and she walks half in a daze fully expecting to find a dead body. She doesn't know how she is going to roll away the stone from the entrance to the tomb, but she wants to anoint the body of Jesus for its long stay in the depths of the earth. This will be one final act of love for her teacher, her mentor, her guide, her master. But the stone had already been rolled back and there **was no** body. Imagine her total confusion and panic as she is jolted from her stupor and tried to wipe the sleep from her eyes and figure out what had happened. She would later return to the tomb and encounter an angel sitting on the stone who asks her, "What did you come to see?" Regardless of what her expectation was, **she** was the first person to not only witness the resurrection scene but also the first person to meet with the Risen Christ. And she ran off to tell the world.

We might ask ourselves today, "What did we come to see?" What were our expectations as we dressed for church, climbed into our cars, made our way through the traffic congestion in the parking lot, and tried to find one of those precious seats in either the church or in the hall? Surely, we were not looking for a dead body; surely, we did not expect to see even a risen person. I will suggest that we came to be a part of the greatest event that has ever happened in this world, to connect with the Resurrection which occurred 2,000 years ago and is still happening today. We want to make sure that we are not forgotten when our time to die comes, no matter how often or how seldom we may come to church. This is the one day that makes all the difference in the world. Jesus Christ is risen! And we look forward with hope that **we** will join him in his Father's kingdom.

But ... we don't have to wait until we die to be with Jesus in God's kingdom; we can **live** with him each and every day of our life here on earth. God's divine life lives within us just as it did within Jesus, and we open ourselves up to that life more and more when we live as Jesus lived --- with mercy and compassion, with forgiveness, with self-sacrificing love for the good of others. We all believe that we have a soul; thus, we are spiritual beings with a physical body. Jesus came to show us how to live as spiritual beings because sometimes, frankly, just words don't communicate adequately what we are to do. So, he showed us when he fed the 5,000 that **we** are to feed the hungry, when he gave the woman a drink of "living" water at the well that **we** are to preach the "living Word of God" to those thirsting for life, when he healed the sick that **we** are to minister to those who are ill or dying, when he forgave those who beat and persecuted him that **we** are to forgive those against whom we have grievances, when he reached out to his enemies, the Samaritans, the Romans, the non-Jews of the Decapolis that **we** are to embrace **everyone** as our brother and sister. Every time we read or hear about the life of Jesus, our soul gets touched and our spiritual life becomes more alive. Jesus showed us how to take the ordinary and let God make it **extraordinary**...even in death.

We experience so many deaths in life --- the death of one we love, a grandparent, a parent or a child; death as in the loss of a job, our home, or our marriage; death as in the loss of family or friends because of a move or a disagreement or a change in life. Yet even in death we find life. A little while back, I did a funeral for an elderly lady who had lived in Bakersfield for a long time but had moved to the Sacramento area to live with her grandchildren because her husband and all of her kids had died and she could no longer live on her own. There were only a handful of people at her funeral, two of her grown grandchildren with their 3 children and a couple of their friends. The day was overcast and gloomy, a chill in the air. But after I finished the funeral and was walking to my car, the sun burst forth and shone brilliantly on me. It struck me that it was like a scene from a Hollywood movie except that it was really happening. Then I heard within me the voice of the lady saying in a most loving way, "Thank you for praying for me, for sending me off into heaven where I longed to be for all my life." Immediately, my spirit leaped up with joy inside for her, this stranger whom I had not even known but who became close to me in death. When we embrace death and don't run away from it, we find a joy which we never knew could exist. Jesus has shown us that death is a holy and sacred event taking us from this earthly life into a heavenly life.

We come here today to celebrate the fact that death is a passage. This life is not a test for the next life; this life is an invitation into eternal life which exists today, here and now. It is ours when we open ourselves up to live in the love of God with one another. Yes, today is the day that the Lord has made, as is each and every day of our lives. Let us rejoice and be glad in it by living in love, and the joy and peace of Jesus Christ will be ours each and every day.

Deacon Mike Richard  
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