

The Congregation of Saint Athanasius
A sermon preached by Father Bradford on Easter Day
April 1, 2018

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The Resurrection is at the head of the *Glorious Mysteries* of our Catholic religion. In the *Joyful Mysteries* Heaven comes down to earth and enters our human existence. The *Sorrowful Mysteries* witness the struggle between Heaven and earth. But the *Glorious Mysteries* declare the conflict is over! The Resurrection proclaims what was accomplished on Good Friday is victory over sin and death. The Easter Good News vindicates our desire for things eternal. Ours is a reasonable and holy hope. Easter places before our eyes the glory we were created to share and which was restored to us by the death of God's Own Son for the sins of the world.

Because Christ is risen we see the Divine seal of absolute truth in every word Jesus said, and every promise He made. Because of the Resurrection we know what we must do, *for Whom* we must do it, and *to Whom* we must look for the grace to do it. We know the final purpose of our journey. We also know the Way, the Truth, and the Life that is able to get us there. The answer to all is Christ is Risen!

Gladness permeates Easter. This is not the happiness a story-turned-tragic had a good ending. There is no good news for us if the message is "We're so happy for you, Jesus; it all worked out best for you." Rather, we proclaim with the Psalmist: "This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it." This day and all its proclamations and benefits *are given to us*, and we rejoice in it.

We *will* be glad. We will *will to be glad*, in the day the Lord hath made. The whole evidence of the Scriptures is Almighty God made us to praise, serve, and reverence Him here on earth and to be with Him forever in Heaven. We were not created to be miserable. Bad things can and do happen to good people, to *all* people. Bad things can be accidents, not intended by God. We have an old prayer: "God does not willingly afflict or grieve the children of men." But the Gospel assertion is we bring the misery part of it upon ourselves. The Catholic Church can seriously and fearlessly look at sin, all the seamy and unvarnished horror of it, because she does so in the confidence of knowing Christ's Resurrection. The Church can spend herself working for the relief of the poor and suffering because *all* are children of God, and because she desires to aid all souls in gaining or regaining a right relationship to their Father in Heaven. Christ did not come to us for nothing. He

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said He came that “we might have life, and have it more abundantly.” Knowing the Resurrection makes primary our combating sin, and our concern about suffering. Self-discipline and self-denial and charity towards others have as their end that we may all taste and gain Heaven.

Christian gladness is a fruit of the Resurrection. This gladness is not a surface happiness nor is it a warm, inside, feeling. Christian joy does not take rise in the emotions, although it can and often does issue in the warm response of a human heart filled with Divine love. But Christian joy is a seriously-based confidence in the eternal and loving God. It is an assurance lying deep in the soul and which persists despite external misery and suffering and hardship. Christian joy is too deep to be destroyed by surface problems. If that were not so, our religion would have died out when our ancestors met the lions in the arenas of ancient Rome! Christian joy is “the peace which passeth all understanding,” and is kept alive and fed by divine grace, and the deliberate response of the human will to the promptings of the Holy Ghost.

So on “this day which the Lord hath made”, we rejoice God’s Son is risen from the dead. Satan is the loser. Death has lost its sting. The grave has lost its victory because Christ Risen is the promise of our inheritance in God’s Kingdom. That is the reason for Christian gladness. This gladness results when you and I are anchored in the Resurrection Life. It is a life which does not have its roots in the world of created things. We must practice a certain and definite detachment, not from souls but from the secular mindset. But even that world will appreciate when we are “poor in spirit.” This does not mean not having two nickels to rub together! It does mean being *hungry for the things of God*.

The Resurrection bids us: “Set your affections on things above, and not on things on earth; for ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.” To be hid with Christ in God is the passport to the Christian gladness, the fruit of the resurrection life. For “He that hath the Son, hath Life.” *Alleluia!*