

The Congregation of Saint Athanasius  
A sermon preached by Father Bradford at The Great Easter Vigil  
April 20, 2019

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The Resurrection is at the head of the Glorious Mysteries of our Catholic religion. In the Joyful Mysteries of the Rosary, Heaven comes down to earth and enters our human existence. We think of Christmas. The Sorrowful Mysteries witness to the struggle between Heaven and earth. We think of Lent. But the Glorious Mysteries, of which the Resurrection is the chief, declare the conflict is over! They give us the right to a reasonable and holy hope for things eternal. They place before our eyes and hearts the glory we are created to share, and which was restored to us by the death of God's Own Son for the sins of the world.

Christ is Risen. In that fact is the Divine seal of absolute truth on every word Jesus said and every promise He made. Because of the Resurrection we know what we must do and *to Whom* we must look. We know the final purpose of our journey. We also know the way, the truth, and the life Who is able to get us there.

That is the cause of Easter gladness. This is not happiness; a story turned tragic had a good ending! The Gospel message is not "we're so happy for you Jesus, that it all worked out best for you!" The Gospel good news is joy of a different sort. With the Psalmist we proclaim, "This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it."

We will be glad in the day the Lord hath made. For we know Almighty God made this day and made us to praise, serve, and reverence Him here on earth and to be happy with Him forever in Heaven. We were not created to be miserable. The Gospel asserts *we* brought misery upon ourselves. For that reason our Catholic religion must necessarily tell *the whole story*. The Church must seriously and fearlessly look at sin, all the seamy, unvarnished, horror of it, in the confidence of knowing Christ's Resurrection. Knowing the Resurrection motivates our view of sin and our proclamation of the call to holiness. The reason we talk about self-discipline and self-denial is because they urge us to die to sin so we can taste and gain Heaven.

All the great saints and ascetics of Christian history have been joy-filled people. This is not a surface happiness nor is it a warm, inside, feeling. True Christian happiness does not take its rise in the emotions. Because Christ is Risen, Christian

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gladness is *a fruit of the Resurrection*. Easter is the spring-board of a seriously-based confidence and assurance in the eternal and loving God, an assurance lying deep in the soul, and which persists in spite of external suffering or misery. Christian joy is “the peace which passeth all understanding.” It is kept alive by divine grace and by the response of the human will to the promptings of grace.

On this day which the Lord hath made, God’s Son is risen from the dead. And there are consequences! Death has lost its sting; the grave has lost its victory. Christ Risen is the promise of our inheritance in God’s Kingdom. That is the reason for Christian gladness.

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. For, “He that hath the Son, hath life.” Alleluia!