

The Congregation of Saint Athanasius  
A sermon preached by Father Bradford on Easter Day  
April 12, 2020

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On Good Friday we were learning to *die* with Christ. When we were baptized it was into the mystery of His death. Baptism is indelible. That is because Christ's death is a death to sin forever. Ever since Baptism, we have been dying daily to all that could separate us from our Lord Jesus. On Good Friday each year we try to dig a little deeper into all it means to die daily with Christ Crucified.

Today it is different. We come to the Great Fifty Days of Easter to learn how to *rise* with Christ from death and how to *live* with Him. That too is something forever. And not just in some vague future time. The new life in Christ is for *this day* and for every day to come.

Easter is the Festival of New Life. It is more than remembering Christ's own triumph over death. It is that, of course. But since He did everything for us, His Easter triumph is *for us*. We call Easter the springtime of souls, when all the mysteries of Christ's life and teaching appear and open to us their hidden power. These very days we see the buds and blooms of nature now appearing and opening their beauty to us. The beauty of nature's springtime only lasts a short time. Christ's victory is forever.

So many people, cynical of life, and confronted by the hideous reality of a world-wide pandemic, may have said "I wish I were dead." And many are dying, and, tragically, alone, because of the necessity of social-distancing. Each of us has more than just an abstract idea of how difficult life can be. We can read about that daily in the newspapers. And we wonder how desperate must be the condition of souls who do not have Easter faith as bedrock for their souls.

The gospel message is that Christ's mysterious Godhead begins to shine in His Resurrection. You can only have the Resurrected Jesus. He isn't available any other way. And the Resurrected Lord Jesus is glorious in and through human nature. In this time of great pestilence and mortality Gospel-centered lives can be scared to be hopeful. The Gospel sends the message to suffering souls that all human life, under any and all circumstances, is a sacred thing: full of the ingredients and hope of transcendent life.

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Christ Risen is not simply the subject matter for stained-glass windows and sacred music with lively choruses. Christ Risen shows us human nature living by the Divine power of goodness and beauty. It is Christ Risen which inspired those windows and music. The human nature of Jesus Christ is taken into God so that we can be there too, and be inspired to participate in that Divine realm of goodness and beauty. The Gospel Good News is not a bit of mirth to cheer us during the pandemic. The fact of the Resurrection is to be with always. God's praises penetrate into all we suffer, as it most surely did for the saints.

The joy of the Lord is our strength in all circumstances, and a very present help in time of need. The world is a different place because Christ is Risen. His Resurrection is the very foundation of redeemed human life, giving all life its unnegotiable and everlasting worth.