

Sunday of the Myrrbearing Women

My Dear Brothers and Sisters in the Lord,

Christ is Risen! Truly He is Risen!

As we gather together in this beautiful Sunday morning in this Holy Cathedral, I wonder how many of us here take certain things in our life for granted. Our families, our homes, our jobs, and even our own health are all most certainly important to us, but rarely does one take center stage and absorb all of our attention, time and energy. Rarely that is, unless something is in jeopardy. It seems that only when we lose something do we really begin to understand how much it means to us.

No one knows what I am trying to say better than those who have experienced it personally. I remember hearing of the true story of a young four-year-old boy who was at the beach with his family. After he went to get some water to fill up his bucket, he turned around and became suddenly disoriented by the large crowd. He

could not seem to find his family. So, he began to look for them. Naturally, after only a few minutes, his family became concerned. And then, after there was no sight of him, concern turned into fear. And then, fear into a living nightmare. Not only they were searching the boardwalk, but the family watched as lifeguards searched the ocean floor for the little boy. Most had begun to determine, that he must have gotten pulled into the ocean, and was dragged out to sea.

Distraught, and full of anxiety and pleading with God to give them another chance, the family prayed to just to see their little son and brother once more – dead or alive. And then, a call came on the radio, someone found him sleeping on a park bench four miles a way in a neighboring town. He was okay, and a police officer was driving him back. You could imagine, the sheer joy and jubilation that filled not only the boy's mother and his family but also those who helped with the search. I can honestly say that there is nothing compared to the feeling of getting something back that you thought you lost forever. It just makes you feel good all over.

And that is precisely the emotions that the Myrr-bearers had in today's Gospel story. They were on their way to anoint the dead body of Christ. They were walking together mourning the loss of the Messiah. Yet, in the face of hopelessness and death, they found the very large stone rolled away, and the tomb that contained the Teacher, was empty.

Then, they heard the joyous news from a young man sitting by the tomb, much like the voice of the person over the radio, saying, "Do not be amazed; you seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen; he is not here." And with those words, what they feared was the end, became now a new beginning. Death had somehow been conquered, and Jesus Christ was not dead, but alive!

In the same way for us dear friends, we ought to feel the joy of the Resurrection not in some passive, annual, fading moment – much like we celebrate New Year's or Thanksgiving Day. The joy of Christ's resurrection must shine a light of glory within our dark souls. It should give us the same elation as when a ship lost a sea,

sees the beacon of the lighthouse in the never-ending darkness. The Good News must and ought to be a catalyst for change and for genuine personal transformation.

However, as with every process there can exist many obstacles. Just like the women this morning were discussing how they were going to move that large stone, so too even though we may have been baptized, Christ may not appear alive within us. Rather, he might seem to be paralyzed, immobilized and yes, even dead. We may be covering His glory behind a heavy stone of sin. The sins of ignorance, indifference and the stones of bad habits which have been built up over the years. So how will these stones be moved?

Well, just like that obstacle did not stop those women from getting up very early that morning to anoint the body of Christ, knowing full way that they might not even be able to get in. So too, we must take our first steps towards a new life, with faith and hope that the Lord will help us overcome anything that stands in our way.

Christ will recognize our intent, and he will see that we are making the first move. Then, he will most certainly guide and protect us. He will, if only we trust in Him, and begin to allow his love to radiate our very being. Do not fear, dear friends, the love of Christ, can move away that stone.

Another very important observation I would like to point out today, is that the women as they approached the tomb that morning did not go empty handed. They had brought with them very expensive ointments in order to complete the burial anointing. So too, as we walk we should bring something with us. Even though our faith experience may be shallow, and we our stained with sin, we can still offer to the Lord whatever we have left that is holy. We can bring to the tomb of Christ, the beginning of good will, the little we have of love, some generosity towards our fellow man and our feeble prayer. We can offer what remains of our spiritual life, with the hope that it will eventually flourish and blossom.

Finally, we are reminded that when the angel of God moved the large stone away from the tomb, the earth shook. The stone was not moved and placed gently aside. No, it was moved so abruptly and with such force, that it created an earthquake. In the same way, whatever stands in front of a pure and honest relationship with Christ, cannot be thought of a making a partial adjustment. It is not a matter of moving some loose stones and leaving the whole as unchanged as possible. No, an earthquake is needed. Our change must be total, and it must affect our entire life not just part of it. It should transform the way we wake up in the morning and go to sleep at night. It ought to challenge every word we speak and each thought that comes into our mind. It must cause us to seriously evaluate and reevaluate every choice we take and even every decision we have made. The change must be total, and it must affect us at our core.

With these words, my dear brothers and sisters in Christ, I hope that we might all begin to walk together to a new life in the Risen

Christ. Allow his Glorious Resurrection, to rejuvenate your faith and to elevate your soul. Constantly press forward as go, doing good deeds and focusing on your heavenly goal. Do not be overcome by any obstacles you will encounter, for the Lord will help you. In the end, think only of the joy of regaining that which you thought was lost forever, and cherish the opportunity to begin again and have another chance at eternal life. AMEN.