



Easter 2023

Dear parishioners and friends of St. Mary's,

The Church, both East and West, is now reaching the destination of its Lenten pilgrimage of prayer, penance, fasting, and works of charity. Our journey to Easter involves not just a reverent remembrance of the past, but also a life changing engagement with present realities as we move towards the future with trust. The heart of the paschal mystery is a profound encounter with the Lord, crucified and yet risen and present in our midst. This encounter is made possible by the gift of faith and hope that make real love for God, and therefore one another, possible. The risen Lord contains all of time: past, present and future. He is the alpha and the omega, the beginning and the end. In Him, who is love itself, all of creation reaches its fulfillment because love is stronger than sin and death. Love alone creates, love alone redeems and, in the end, love alone will triumph!

However, love is not magic, but is manifested and proven true by sacrifice. In that sense the triumph of the resurrection is already contained (both hidden and revealed) within the mystery of the Cross. The death, burial and resurrection of the Lord as it relates to us is somehow anticipated in the story of Lazarus of Bethany (John 11: 1-44) who is restored to life although he had been four days in the tomb. Jesus weeps for his friend Lazarus and, at the entrance to his tomb, orders that the stone be removed. He cries out, "Lazarus, come forth!" Lazarus immediately emerges from the tomb although his head is completely wrapped in a towel and his hands and feet bound with burial cloths. Jesus then says, "Untie him, and let him go."

Lazarus represents you! He represents each and every one of us. Jesus weeps for the times when something good has died within us. He weeps for the times in which we are bound, shackled and imprisoned within a place of darkness, despair, or alienation from Him and from one another. With tender compassion, and the life restoring power of His merciful love, He cries out to those who await his voice: "Come forth, you are free."

Christ is risen from the dead, trampling down death by death, and upon those in the tombs bestowing life (Byzantine paschal hymn).

Easter greetings and blessings to you and all of your loved ones,

*Father Kevin Kennedy*