

St. Hedwig Catholic Church

LOS ALAMITOS, CA

Easter 2020

THE LORD IS RISEN! ALLELUIA!



Fr. Christopher Heath
Pastor

The word "alleluia" literally means "praise the Lord." It is used in both the Old and New Testaments as a shout of praise, usually when one is happy or excited. From Ash Wednesday until the Easter Vigil, this word alleluia has not been said or sung in church. In fact, in some Eastern Churches, they even have a ritual where they bury the word in the

ground, and then dig it up with great solemnity on Easter!

To praise the Lord is our strength and our delight. Acknowledging that Jesus is Lord is an act of faith and praising Him for the amazing fact of His bodily Resurrection is also an act of faith. To be convinced of the truth of this central Christian doctrine means accepting from Biblical evidence and the constant teaching of the Church that in fact Jesus really did rise from the dead on the third day after His death on the Cross. Some don't accept this teaching; some refuse to believe that Jesus rose from the dead; some believe that Christianity is nothing more than a vast conspiracy invented by the disciples; some don't believe that Jesus is the Son of God, or divine in any way; some people don't even believe that Jesus really existed!

Our Christian and Catholic Faith is founded upon eyewitness testimony from those who were there. We accept such testimony in a court of law, we rely on eyewitnesses to tell us what we did not see for ourselves. Either you find their testimony believable or not. To be a Christian is to accept that the disciples and evangelists fully and correctly described what they saw and heard.

This testimony is, admittedly, hard to believe. Even one of the Twelve Apostles, St. Thomas, who wasn't present in the Upper Room the evening Jesus first appeared to them, refused to believe what his companions were telling him! And this was after Jesus Himself had repeatedly told His Apostles He would be crucified, die, and on the third day be raised. Thomas simply would not accept the truth of the Resurrection without personal, visible proof. Luckily for him, Jesus appeared the following Sunday and gave Thomas the freedom to probe the nail marks and the wound in His side. Jesus did not berate Thomas for his lack of faith: Jesus knew His Resurrection would indeed be hard

to accept. His only comment was, "Blessed are those who do not see, yet believe" (see John 20:24-29).

Perhaps this is a mild chastisement to Thomas, but it is more a compliment for us, and for anyone who has lived since the time of the Apostles and that first generation of Christians. Is it possible to be a Christian and not believe in the Resurrection? St. Paul, who was not an eyewitness, was so convinced of the truth of this event that he wrote, "If Christ is preached as raised from the dead, how can some among you say there is no resurrection of the dead? If there is no resurrection of the dead, then neither has Christ been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, then empty is our preaching; empty too your faith. Then we are also false witnesses to God...[and] your faith is in vain; you are still in your sins. If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are the most pitiable people of all" (1Corinthians 15:12-19).

St. Paul insists that the entire Christian message hinges on the fact of the bodily Resurrection of Jesus Christ. Why be a Christian only for this life, if there is no eternal life? If there is no Heaven, no religion (a la John Lennon & Yoko Ono), what meaning does life have? If all we get is a few decades here then cease to exist, what motivates any selflessness, sacrifice, moderation, or commitment? If there are no eternal consequences to our lives and our choices, what good is morality?

I can't speak for anyone else, but for me, I have to believe in eternal life, bodily resurrection, Heaven, Hell, Purgatory, and judgment. I am personally convinced of the truths of our Catholic faith and have dedicated myself as a priest to live them and preach them (however imperfectly). I believe the eyewitnesses. I refuse to accept there is no Heaven, or that religion is just one of many false ways of life. I believe God knows that we needed this revelation from Jesus, that His Resurrection shows us our future, our destiny as sons and daughters of the family of the Holy Trinity. I think it's essential that we know that our human nature – a body-soul hybrid – is our eternal reward: we are a soul in a body. This is the only way we've ever known life since the first moment of our conception in our mothers' wombs. God made us this way, death (the result of sin) will temporarily separate body and soul, and in the Age to come God will restore our souls in our bodies, the way we humans were always meant to experience life. Christ's Resurrection shows us this is God's plan for the human race.

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We live little deaths and little resurrections all our lives. Bad things happen and (sometimes) good things come from them. We do something stupid and (sometimes) we learn a good lesson and it changes our lives for the good. We have setbacks, disappointments, losses and (sometimes) something even better comes along we couldn't have imagined or made happen ourselves. We sacrifice things now for future returns, we fall and get back up, we have the expression "no pain, no gain," knowing that whatever we do or put up with now will reap rewards later. God sets us up experiencing these little (and sometimes not so little) deaths and resurrections, so that when the "big one" comes, we may not be so reticent to believe it and welcome it.

I've written this reflection as more of a logical statement of faith, not so much as a devotional piece. So many come to church on Easter who don't come on a regular basis that I thought it was important to consider the Christian and Catholic doctrine of the Resurrection of Jesus as a logical choice. The world gives us plenty of options, religions, philosophies, ways of life, material pursuits, and senses to satisfy: perhaps there's more to life than worldly goals and pleasures? Perhaps we ought to take the long view, consider our final end in this world and ask ourselves honestly: is this all there is? What's the meaning of life? What's the good of limiting myself with morality, or sacrificing myself for others or some greater good? Could it be that Jesus has shown us the answer? That Resurrection is what enlightens life, gives us meaning, focus, truth, beauty, purpose, and a path? Where in this world will these intangible goods ever be satisfied? In Christ, in His Church, in the firm conviction that Jesus' death and Resurrection will guide and save us. Alleluia!

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Parish Office Hours

Mon - Wed: 9:00am - 7:30pm *
Thurs & Fri: 9:00am - 5:00pm *
Sat & Sun: 9:00am - 1:30pm

* Closed for lunch from 12:00-12:30pm

Regular Mass Schedule

Saturday Vigil 5:30pm
Sunday 8:00am, 10:00am
12:00pm, 5:30pm
Mon - Sat 8:30am

Holy Days of Obligation as announced.

Confession

Wednesdays • 6:30pm
Saturdays • 4:00pm - 5:00pm

Prayers and Devotions

Adoration
Start: 16th of the month • 9:15am
End: 17th of the month • 8:00am

Rosary
Mondays - Fridays • 8:00am
Mondays • 6:00pm

