

April 12, 2020 – Easter Sunday - Cycle A
Father Larry Richards

Good Morning. How are you? Blessed. How I miss hearing that in this church but I know it's going to be changing soon. Happy Easter to all of you. Today as we celebrate Easter, we gotta do three things. First we gotta believe that Jesus Christ is risen. Second, we gotta receive that power in our life and third, we gotta be witnesses to His resurrection to all we meet. OK? So the first thing we gotta do is we gotta believe it. You know, I think a lot of people go through the motions of Easter. We celebrate Easter. It's one of the big things we celebrate as Christians but we don't believe it. You know, again, this is what we were created for. We were not created for Earth, you know, I'm sorry as I've said a million times, heaven is much nicer than Erie, Pennsylvania or wherever you happen to be watching from, Perth Australia, please. Heaven is what we were all created for. We are gonna live forever. That's the promise of Easter: that Jesus rose from the dead. He's not dead. This isn't about a guy who lived 2000 years ago. Every time you write the date 2020, or any date, it's A.D., in the year of our Lord. It is a statement of resurrected faith that Jesus Christ is alive. So, what we need to do is truly believe that because when we believe that, our sins are forgiven and we live forever.

So, the first question I ask you is: Do you really believe? Not because you were taught but because you know Him. You know when I sit there and I used to go around and I still will again hopefully, I remember asking a bunch of kids in Baton Rouge, Louisiana in an all-boys school early in the morning. I said to them and they didn't want to see me there on a Monday morning at 8:00 and so I always get them as I always do and I sit there and I said to the boys,

“Gentlemen, I submit to you that Jesus Christ is not God. You prove to me that He is.”

Then, they woke up and they thought, “Is he a priest? I think he's a priest. He must be a nut.”

Then, I sit there and I go around to each one and I say, “You – do you believe Jesus Christ is God?”

Then one kid would say, “Yeah.”

“Why do you believe?”

“Because He performed miracles.”

I said, “Oh, is that all it takes is to perform miracles?”

“Benny performs miracles. Did you ever see him on TV? Are you coming? We're coming and then everybody falls down.” That's a miracle. Does that make Benny God?

“No”

I say, "You – do you believe Jesus Christ is God?"

You always get one, the most honest of them says, "I don't know" which is I think most people are "I don't know".

"OK – at least you're honest".

"You – do you believe that Jesus Christ is God?"

"Yes"

"Why?"

"Because the bible says so."

I said, "The Mormons have a bible. The Muslims have a bible. Jews have a bible. None of them says Jesus Christ is God. What makes our bible right?"

"Oh."

Another one – "Do you believe that Jesus Christ is God?"

"Why"

"Because He died for us, Father"

"Oh, is that all it takes. I'm gonna die and if that's all I gotta do, I'll die for you if I get to be God out of it. Sure – why not?"

And so everything they say and I'll always get one that will sit there and say "Do you believe that Jesus Christ is God?"

"No Father"

"Well, enjoy hell".

Then the next one everybody goes, "OOOOh".

But then I ask every single person and every single person gives me something else. Finally, I keep asking until finally someone gets it. I'll say, "You – do you believe Jesus Christ is God?"

"Yes."

“Why?”

“Because He rose from the grave.” Ding, ding, ding, ding, ding.

“Yes, but how do you know He rose from the grave?”

“The bible says so.”

“The bible says so.”

Then I say, “Come on, ask me, ask me”.

Then they’ll sit there and say, “Father, do you believe that Jesus Christ is God?”

“Yes”

Then I’ll say, “Ask me why, why?”

“Well why, Father?”

“Because I know Him. I’ve experience Him.”

This morning I woke up late. Instead of 3:55 a.m., I woke up at 4:36. I did a Holy Hour with him. I’ve done a Holy Hour with Him for many, many, many, many years over 30-some years. I know Jesus Christ is alive. Do you know Jesus Christ is alive? The only way that will happen is if you spend time with Him. Can’t happen any other way so this is the time when we are separated for you to spend time with Jesus, more and more each day so that you come to believe and you know that He’s not dead; He is alive.

The second thing that has to happen is that we have to receive this resurrection power. One of my favorite songs is by Chris Tomlin. You all know Chris Tomlin? He has a song called, Resurrection Power and I love this. I’m gonna read this part to you, it says,

“You called me out of the grave by name” Isn’t that good. “You called me out of all my shame. I see the old has passed away. The new has come. Now I have resurrection power.”

What is resurrection power? That means that we are people that God lives inside of and all the things that happen to Jesus: remember He said, “You will do what I do but far greater than these.” Why? “Because I go to the Father.” God is resurrection powers inside you and me. That means we don’t have to walk around defeated. We get to walk around in the power of God.

You know in the midst of all this stuff, one of the things I read every night before I go to bed is Psalm 91 and that would be a great thing when you get afraid and you're sitting there wondering what the world's coming apart; pray the promises of Psalm 91 but make it personal. You all know Psalm 91?

Again, I rewrote the Psalm, not rewrote the Psalm but this is the way I say it every night. I just make it personal. I say, "I who dwell in the shelter of the most high, who abide in the shade of the Almighty. I will say to You Lord, my refuge and my fortress, my God in whom I trust. For it is You who will deliver me from the snare of the trapper and from the deadly pestilence or illness or virus. You will cover me with your opinions and under your wings I find refuge. Your faithfulness is a shelter and a shield to me. I will not be afraid of the terror of the night nor the arrow that flies by day or the illness that stalks in darkness, or the destruction that lays waste at noon. 1,000 may fall at my side. 10,000 at my right hand but it shall not approach me. I will only look on with my own eyes and see the recompense of the wicked for I have made You, Lord, my refuge. You the most high as my dwelling. No evil will befall me nor will any illness or plague come near my house for you give your angels charge over me to guard me in all my ways. They will bear me up in their hands lest I strike my foot against the stone."

This is the power of God living inside of us. I'd encourage you to say Psalm 91 every day. Beg His protection over you. Beg His power inside of you.

You know, this morning after I woke up and I went to the scripture and it says, "Be worthy of the life you have been called to". I went and the first thing I did was I went to the You Tube channel and I got and I know you have You Tube because you are watching it now and I watch as I do every Easter, The Greatest Story Ever Told – just the resurrection part. And it's the greatest thing because there it is and it's the darkest part and all of a sudden you hear the Alleluia Chorus start singing, "Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia, alleluia" and it gets bigger and bigger that the resurrection of Christ changes the world and it should change our hearts and our lives. So receive the power. First believe; second, receive the power of the resurrection and then third, what you and I gotta be is witnesses.

So that means we gotta be witnesses to the resurrection. That's what the second reading talks about. To be a witness to the resurrection, I want you to do two things. One we talked about last night – those who watched but the other one we did not. But again, Lent was only 40 days but Easter is 50 days and as I said last night, "Let's really live Easter."

So, if you say the rosary every day and first I'd encourage you to do what you want but every day for these 50 days of Easter, say the rosary but just say the Glorious Mysteries. Why? So that every day, you and I are reflecting on the power of the resurrection. We've had lots of time to reflect upon the crucifixion and the death. Now, let's focus on the resurrection of Jesus and not only the resurrection but the power of the Spirit who comes to us at Pentecost. So this is a whole time of life so let's focus on that by saying the rosary every day and focusing on the Glorious Mysteries.

The second part I want to again tell you if you weren't here last night. Focus these next 50 days on bringing life and hope to others. Every day, starting today, decide that you're gonna do something to give someone else life and someone else hope. At this time of great struggle, let's be hope in the world.

Let's be the resurrection of Christ in the world. So you can start a journal every day, a hope journal or a life journal and you can do stuff to give yourself life and hope but decide to do something every day, reach out to someone, email them, call them on the phone, tell them that you love them. Affirm them. Build them up. You will be a witness to the resurrection.

So, this Easter, let us believe that Christ is alive. Let us sit there and receive that power in our own life and let us be witnesses to that power by bringing life, hope and love to others.

May each of you know His love today and forever. Amen. God bless you. Happy Easter.