

In this last week of Lent, we look forward to Easter and anticipate the Resurrection

Dear brothers and sisters in the Risen Lord,

I hope the season of Lent has been a time of reflection, grace, and moments of turning to the Lord for all of you. We are about to enter into Holy Week, which is not only about a series of special liturgical services, but more importantly a personal invitation from the Lord Himself to walk with Him and enter fully into the events of our salvation. In doing so, our own personal triumphs and sorrows, Calvaries and Gethsemanies, will point us to the reality of the Lord's Resurrection in our lives.

I would encourage you to take full advantage of the Holy Week services each day — in our Cathedral and parishes of the Diocese. The parish priests, religious, and parish staff members have worked hard so that these liturgical moments can be a dynamic encounter with the Lord and his Body on Earth, the Church. There are not only individual moments, but moments of true communion for all of us together.

As we look to Easter Sunday, the great day of the Resurrection, the words of Pope Benedict XVI can help us reflect on this most central day to us, that Christ is truly risen indeed:

Quite definitely, this is what faith in the Resurrection is concerned with: the real power of God, and the importance of human responsibility. That the power of God is hope and joy: this is the liberation revealed at Easter. In the Pasch, God reveals himself, his power — superior to the power of death — the power of the love of the Trinity. So the paschal revelation gives us the right to sing "Alleluia" in a world overcast with the cloud of death (Journey to Easter, p. 132).

These words of the Holy Father also certainly recall and confirm St. Paul's encouraging and triumphant words to the Corinthians:

"Death is swallowed up in victory. Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?" The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 15:54-57).

This great hope of Easter is the Good News that needs to be proclaimed to the entire world through the witness of our lives. This world that is often "overcast with the clouds of death" needs to be brought into the light of the Resurrected Christ, and we, the witnesses of Christ, are that light! This is seen so powerfully in the rich symbolism

expressed in the Easter Vigil — beginning with the light of the Paschal Candle and then gradually through the lighted candles of each and every person — the light of Christ pierces the darkness of sin and death and reveals the glory and power of Christ. We must be that witness to the world that Christ is truly risen and that his grace and power are really manifested in our own lives.

We must also remember as well that the glory and truth of the Easter season lasts 50 days, until Pentecost. In this Paschaltide, let us walk with the Risen Lord as He reveals to us again his Body on Earth, to strengthen our faith and show us that He indeed has truly conquered sin and death. Welcome to all who are visiting with us during Holy Week and Easter and all who will be at the Masses and services with us. I want to also welcome in a special way all of the RCIA Elect and Candidates who will be received into the Church throughout all of our parishes. May God bless you abundantly and fill your lives with an abundance of peace and joy. You are all truly a witness of hope to us all!

Christ is Risen Indeed! Alleluia!

+Bishop Kevin Vann

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