

April 4, 2010

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Jesus has risen from the tomb. Our Risen Lord is alive and present to us. May you know His peace in rich measure!

The resurrection of Jesus is the very heart of the Gospel. Without it, there would be no Gospel, no Good News. As St. Paul said, "Vain is your faith if there is no resurrection."

Through His death and resurrection from the dead, Jesus has redeemed us of sin, shattered the chains of death, and made it possible for us to share even now in the very life and love of God.

We profess this mystery of faith at every Mass through one of four proclamations. You no doubt recall the first two: "Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again....Dying you destroyed our death, rising you restored our life. Lord Jesus, come in glory."

Jesus is not only exalted at the right hand of the Father. He is present to us now in the Church in Word and Sacrament. He abides within us through the presence and power of His Holy Spirit. He is present when we gather in His name. He is present to us in the poor, the sick, the lonely, and disenfranchised.

Easter is a baptismal feast because, in Baptism, we are buried with Christ and already begin to share in His risen life. The adults who have been preparing to become members of the Church are baptized at the Easter Vigil. At the Easter Masses, we renew our baptismal promises.

St. Paul speaks of the effects of Baptism in the Second Reading at the Easter Mass: "For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

**When Christ your life appears, then you too will appear with Him in glory”
(Colossians 3:3-4).**

**In the Reading from his Letter to the Romans at the Easter Vigil Mass, Paul assures us: “Are you unaware that we who are baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? We were indeed buried with Him through Baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might live in newness of life. For if we have grown into union with Him through a death like His, we shall also be united with Him in the resurrection”
(Romans 6:3-5).**

In that same Reading, Paul explains that our death with Christ in Baptism freed us from sin. “Consequently, you too must think of yourselves as being dead to sin and living for God in Christ Jesus” (Romans 6:11).

Jesus’ death, resurrection, and presence to us is cause for our hope. We still experience our crosses, conflicts, challenges, and temptations. However, our trust in Jesus’ love and powerful presence to us enables us to face the challenges of every new day with courage and tranquility. We know our own weaknesses, but we have confidence that the power of God is greater than our own limitations.

Jesus’ death and resurrection is also our sure hope that when our earthly pilgrimage comes to an end, we will live forever with Christ and with our brothers and sisters who have gone before us. There is no deeper comfort than our faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus when we reflect upon our own mortality or commit into the hands of the Lord our departed relatives or friends.

In the words of the hymn by Lucien Deiss: “If we die with the Lord, we shall live with the Lord. If we endure with the Lord, we shall reign with the Lord.” Jesus assures us, as He assured Martha before raising her brother, Lazarus, from the dead, “I am the resurrection and the life; whoever believes in me, even if he

dies, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die” (John 11:25). With Martha, we profess our faith during the Easter Masses: “Yes, Lord, I have come to believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God.”

May Jesus’ Easter peace be with you and your loved ones!

Sincerely in the Risen Lord,

Most Reverend Dale J. Melczek
Bishop of Gary