

## Homily for Easter Sunday – 2023

By Deacon Richard Hay

“He is Risen – Risen indeed! Alleluia – Alleluia.”

What a glorious proclamation!

Our journey through Lent is complete, we can once again proclaim alleluia as we rejoice entering the time of Easter to celebrate the resurrection of Christ. We also celebrate our new brothers and sisters who received the sacraments of baptism, confirmation, and first holy communion last night at the Easter Vigil and who have now joined the Body of Christ to continue their own faith journeys as part of Christ’s church and this community – our parish.

Many of you might remember a radio show hosted by Paul Harvey where he told “The Rest of the Story”. He would share these tales of unique circumstances behind events in the world that had some sort of historical significance or were about a well-known person. Well, today – on this Easter morning – through our readings and the gospel, we come to realize that the apostles could have used an episode of Paul Harvey telling them the rest of the story on that first Easter morning.

We begin today hearing once again, as we do each Easter Sunday, Peter's account of Jesus's life from when Jesus was baptized by John in the Jordan River, his three years of ministry, his passion, suffering and death on the cross, his resurrection and then his commissioning of the apostles to carry the good news to all ends of the earth.

Do you know why and to whom Peter was telling this story?

He was telling it in the home of the roman centurion named Cornelius who had his entire family and servants present to hear it. Shortly after Peter finished the story, the Holy Spirit comes down upon all present and Peter then baptized the entire household in Jesus's name. The members of Cornelius's family and household were obviously on a journey to belief in Christ and made it together resulting in Peter's visit.

After our own Lenten journeys over these past forty days, we have also experienced Jesus's life in a very particular way, especially through his entrance into Jerusalem to shouts of Hosanna on Palm Sunday, and then the most holy Easter Triduum from Holy Thursday, through Good Friday, and in the quiet of Holy Saturday. We have now arrived at the empty tomb and the promised resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

However, for the apostles' things must have felt very different because they did not yet know the rest of the story quite yet – but as we know – very soon that will happen.

But first – can you imagine the emotions that the disciples went through early on that first Easter morning outside of Jerusalem at the tomb? Remember, they were actively living this experience in the flesh – we on the other hand are blessed to already know how this story ends – but the apostles – they didn't have that knowledge yet.

Mary Magdalene's first reaction in John's gospel, when she finds the empty tomb, is to run and tell the apostles that the body of Jesus had been taken from the tomb – that it had been stolen – what else was she to think in that moment?

This news prompts Peter and John to run to the tomb themselves to see what Mary has witnessed.

John arrived first and slowly knelt down and cautiously peered into the darkness of the tomb through the opening and saw Jesus's burial cloths right there where they had laid Jesus on Good Friday after His death on the cross. I'm sure John was still trying to understand what he was seeing when Peter

caught up and went straight into the tomb, without any hesitation, to also then see its emptiness and the burial cloths that were left behind.

At this point Peter did not fully comprehend what he was seeing. It must have been frightening to find Jesus's body missing, but, as John will write in the gospel that bears his name many years later, they did not yet fully understand that Jesus had to rise from the dead.

To them, in that moment, this was just another bad situation piled on top of the last few days as they watched their master be betrayed, judged, tortured, and then die on the cross.

That walk back into Jerusalem must have been so heart breaking. All they had were each other as witnesses of what they had seen over the last few days and now the body of Christ is gone from the tomb. Can you feel what that emptiness must have felt like in your own hearts? In that moment, the disciples were likely experiencing a deep hurt and confusion.

As I mentioned earlier, we already know the end of the story. We know that Jesus was not in the tomb because his heavenly Father, our God, raised him from the dead as he promised to do. We are able to rejoice in this moment, on this glorious day, because we know the rest of the story. The apostles would

finally know the rest of the story themselves when Jesus appears to them later in the upper room.

At that point, they are also finally able to understand and rejoice in Christ's resurrection.

Today, as we also rejoice for the empty tomb and the resurrection of Christ, it is now time for all of us to continue this journey, to continue this story and carry the Easter message of Christ out into the world because it is not a finished story – it is still being written – each and every day and we are to go out and show that we are disciples of the Risen Christ, that we are a resurrection people by the way we love each other and our neighbor.

Embrace this Easter season – find and experience new ways to celebrate the gift of Christ's passion, death, resurrection, and the gifts and graces that come from His sacrifice. He wants to embrace each and everyone of us close to his heart – and that love is not seasonal – it is unconditional and forever.

We do this because as it was promised: He is Risen – Risen Indeed!

Alleluia – Alleluia!