

Easter Sunday 2016
Luke 24:1-12 C

"WHY DO YOU SEEK THE LIVING AMONG THE DEAD? HE IS NOT HERE, BUT HAS RISEN!"

One bright, beautiful summer day, a family went for a drive in the country. To enjoy the warm air and the smell of the blooming flowers, they rolled down their car windows, which also allowed a bee to fly into the car.

The family's little boy, sitting in the back seat, began to cry uncontrollably and sob hysterically. Much more than just being afraid of the bee, he was allergic to bee stings. To be stung by the bee could mean even death.

His father, understanding his son's fear and knowing his son's condition, gently held out the flattened palm of his hand for the bee to land upon. Silently, the father closed his fingers around and then spread his fingers, allowing the bee to fly free in the car. Amid his son's sobs, the father looked back at his son and said, "Don't be afraid, Son. That bee cannot hurt you anymore." Then, he held out his palm for his son to see. Imbedded in his palm was the stinger from the bee. The father was correct, the bee could not hurt or harm his son anymore.

Today is the celebration of life, eternal life. Jesus Christ has removed the sting out of death for us, so that we don't need to be afraid anymore.

Throughout Lent, we looked at the theme of the Lamb that runs throughout the Bible. Abel offered a lamb in faith as the first sacrifice to God recorded in Genesis. Abraham was instructed by God to offer his only son Isaac. God supplied a lamb and this lamb took Isaac's place in death. At the Exodus, a lamb was killed and eaten, its blood smeared on the door frames of the Israelites' homes. The angel of death "passed over" the

blood-marked houses. The Prophet Isaiah sang of the Lamb who was silent before its shearers and on whom the sin of us all has been laid. The lambs of Abel, of Abraham, of Isaiah point to Christ, the Lamb of God. They were a shadow of things that were to come, as St. Paul writes (Col 2:17).

John the Baptizer knew who Jesus was. At the Jordan, he looked to Christ and confessed, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (Jn 1:29). On Maundy Thursday, Jesus taught His apostles that He was our Passover Lamb. The Apostle St. Paul teaches us, "Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed [for us]" (1 Cor 5:7). On Good Friday, Christ, the Lamb of God, was sacrificed upon the altar of the cross. A Roman centurion, a soldier, a Gentile, spoke the only eulogy for the Lamb of God, "Truly this was the Son of God" (Mt 27:54)!

Because the Sabbath was approaching Friday night, His body was taken in haste from the cross and buried without a proper burial. So the women came early Sunday morning when the Sabbath had ended to give Him a proper burial. Their concern was that someone roll the stone away. But when they arrived at the tomb, they found the stone rolled away from the tomb. There were no Roman soldiers guarding the tomb. And wonder of wonders, when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, "Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; he has risen!" Christ lives! The Passover Lamb sacrificed for us lives!

God accepted the atoning work of His only begotten Son. God heard the cry from the cross, "It is finished!" The sacrifice for our sin was made. We were redeemed.

The Resurrection is God's doing. So that His Son would not see corruption, God -- who sent Jesus into this world to be our Passover Lamb, who gave Him up to die, who abandoned Him to death and the grave -- raised Him from the dead. Jesus, the Son, had been faithful to the Father's plan, faithful even unto death, the death of the cross.

Christ, our Passover was sacrificed for us. Christ our Passover lives. God raised Him from the dead and the Easter resurrection of Christ means that we, too, shall live.

There is nothing sadder in earthly life than standing at the casket of a loved one to bid them farewell, knowing that we will never see them on this side of heaven again. As our hearts grieve; as our hearts cry at the sting of the grave; from where does our comfort come? It comes from the empty tomb of Christ of Easter morning.

There is a single cause of death. Medicine tells us that earthly life ends because blood no longer carries oxygen to the brain. However, the Scripture is truer than science: "The wages of sin is death."

Like Isaac, the end of our journey was certain -- we were to die. We were destined for the grave. But as He did for Isaac, God supplied a lamb to take our place in death. That Lamb was His only begotten Son Jesus Christ. This Lamb took our place and died for us, so that we would never have to taste death.

Like the lamb of the Day of Atonement, God laid the sin of all the world, each and every sin of thought, word, and deed, upon the Lamb

Jesus Christ. For those sins, Jesus died, paying the penalty of our sin with His lifeblood so that we would be forgiven.

On the Day of Atonement, the High Priest would take the blood of the slain lamb into the Holy of Holies and pour it upon the Ark of the Covenant. In the Ark of the Covenant were the tablets upon which God had written the 10 Commandments for Moses. The Commandments always accused us of sin and condemned us for those sins. In this way, the blood of the lamb "covered over" the people's sin. The blood of Jesus Christ flowed from His wounds to "cover over" our sin, "the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin," the Bible says (1 Jn 1).

Like the Children of Israel in Egypt, we found ourselves enslaved to sin and death. Our hearts longed for freedom. The children of God killed the Passover lamb and painted the door frames of their homes with its life blood. Marked by the blood, the angel of death "passed over" their homes, sparing them the sting of death. They were delivered through the blood of the lamb. Marked by the Blood of the Lamb Jesus Christ, death "passes over" us. We are delivered through the blood of the Lamb Jesus Christ.

On Easter cards, on Easter decorations, a butterfly is often pictured. The butterfly has long been the Christian's symbol of the resurrection. When the caterpillar goes into its cocoon, it looks as though it will die. But, from it comes a new life -- the life of a butterfly. We use the symbol of the butterfly to comfort us from the sting of death. Our new life is in Christ. Death and the grave have no hold on Him. Death and the grave have no hold on us.

In the new birth of our baptism, we have risen to a new life, an eternal life, in Christ. Paul teaches us:

We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death ... if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his ... if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him (Ro 6).

Just as Christ lives eternally, we, too, live eternally in Christ.

We can confess with Job,

“I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been thus destroyed, yet in my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another. My heart faints with me” (Job 19)!

Job knew that physical death would one day end his pilgrimage on this earth. But at that moment, the angels would carry his soul to the mansions of heaven.

The Easter resurrection of Christ means that one day, the angels will carry our soul to the bosom of Abraham in heaven. And, on the last day when Jesus comes again in all His glory, He will re-unite our eternal soul with our resurrected body and we will live in the full enjoyment of being with Jesus forever and ever, without end.