

Father O'Connor's Easter Sunday Homily  
20 April 2025

A Southern pastor began preaching on Good Friday by saying, "It's Friday, and Sunday's a-coming."

One of the deacons yelled out encouragingly, "Preach, brother. Preach!"

"It's Friday, and Mary's crying her eyes out, and the disciples are all scattered like sheep without a shepherd. It's Friday, and Sunday's a-coming."

He kept repeating that line until he reached a high point and shouted out, "It's Friday!" And with one voice the congregation shouted back, "And Sunday's a-coming!"

It is my great happiness to stand before you today and proclaim, "It was Good Friday. And now Easter Sunday has come!"

I want to welcome members of our Saint Joseph and Nativity Parishes to this Easter Sunday Mass. And all of you who are joining us from other parishes and churches – and on livestream. We're glad you are with us!

I also want to offer a special welcome to anyone who may be looking for a church family to belong to. We'd be glad to have you as part of our St. Joseph and Nativity Parish Families!

And I also want to offer a very personal word of welcome to anyone here today who hasn't been to church in a while. I am glad that you are here. We've missed you. Our family is not complete without you. So welcome to everyone as we celebrate the Feast of Our Lord's Resurrection.

We are so familiar with the accounts of Jesus' resurrection from the dead that it is difficult for us to capture a sense of the total astonishment of the first witnesses.

To begin with, there are no adequate words to describe what had never happened before to any other human being. We are plunged into the deepest mystery.

For the first time since creation began, there is a living human being who will never know death again. Jesus Christ is truly divine and truly human. On Easter Sunday, eternity and time – both mysterious – have come together. And because Jesus lives, we will live forever.

We can only imagine the complete astonishment of Mary Magdalene and the Apostles when the Risen Christ appeared to them. They must have thought, "He was dead, and somehow He is now alive. He still has the marks of the nails in His hands and feet, and the wound from the spear in His side. It really is Jesus."

We Christian people believe this too. And the faith to do so is itself a gift from God.

Last night, at the Easter Vigil, I received three people into our Catholic Church family. All of them participated in our OCIA [Order of Christian Initiation of Adults].

I baptized Hope Sadowski, whose marriage to her husband, Doug, I witnessed here on 26 March 2021. And later on I also baptized their two children.

I baptized Cole Williams, a freshman at Firelands High School.

I also received a profession of faith from Christian Loo who had been baptized as a baby in another Christian denomination. I had witnessed the sacramental marriage of Christian and his wife, Fiorella, on 18 May 2024.

And I celebrated with all three of them – Hope, Cole and Christian – the Sacrament of Confirmation and gave them their First Holy Communion. They became brand-new Catholics last evening during the Easter Vigil Liturgy, the first Mass of Easter.

Skeptics have come up with all kinds of explanations about what happened to Jesus after Good Friday.

“Jesus came back spiritually from the dead,” some say. According to the tabloids, so does Elvis Presley regularly.

Others say, “Jesus would not be remembered if He had not come back in some way.” That is a bit of an improvement, but Gautama Buddha – who did not come back from the dead – has Jesus beat on this score. Buddha is still remembered after nearly three thousand years.

But what about the faith of billions and billions of Christian people throughout these more than two thousand years who have believed, and who do believe, that Jesus truly rose from the dead?

To use the words of Saint John Henry Cardinal Newman, “You have to bend your stiff neck to decide that your mind is not the measure of all things in heaven and on earth.”

Easter is an invitation to believe with all of your heart and soul, mind and strength that Jesus, who once was dead, now lives. And that because He lives, we will live forever too. This belief gives profound meaning and significance to our lives today.

As the Christian hymn by Bill and Gloria Gaither puts it:

Because He lives, I can face tomorrow.

Because He lives, all fear is gone.

For I know He holds the future.

And life is worth the living just because He lives.

Life has lots of sorrows, lots of “via dolorosas,” lots of “ways of the Cross.”  
And, if you live long enough, it includes some trips to Calvary as well.  
But life has only one Easter.

“It was Good Friday... and now Easter Sunday has come!”  
For Good Friday is not God’s final word. Easter Sunday is.

Because He lives, I can face tomorrow.  
Because He lives, all fear is gone.  
For I know He holds the future.  
And life is worth the living just because He lives.

“It was Good Friday... and now Easter Sunday has come!”

Happy Easter, everyone!