

The Lord Is Risen, Let Us Celebrate!

A Sermon by Fr. Orlando J. Addison, Vicar

Holy Faith Episcopal Church

6990 S. Federal Highway. Port St. Lucie, FL 34952

Easter Sunday, March 31, 2013

Last Friday was a sad Friday, It was a dark Friday, It was the day we remembered the cruelty of the cross, the Lord's humiliation, the beaten he endured for hours, the heavy cross on his shoulder has he dragged it all the way to mount Calvary.

Last Friday was a depressed Friday, our Savior was nailed to the cross for a crime he did not commit; he was nailed to the cross to save us from eternal death and he died a shameful death for the forgiveness of our sins. However, that was Friday! That was yesterday, over two thousand years ago, and yesterday is Gone! All we have, all that is left, are the memories of that sad, depressing Good Friday!

However, today is a day of celebration! The Lord wants us to leave Good Friday behind and embrace His joy, His Glory, His festival. Jesus invites us to put aside all worries, all concerns, sadness, hopelessness. He wants us to remove the darkness of trouble over our heads and celebrate His day; put away your fear, anxiety, and all negative feelings. Stop being a typical Episcopalian, one who celebrates Good Friday every Sunday, but has not received the Good News of Easter, and clothe yourself with the joy the disciples felt when they received the news from the women. Don't be ashamed to shout out Amen, Alleluia, don't be ashamed to raise your hand to praise the Lord, don't feel embrace to stand and dance for the Lord when the Spirit touches because today Salvation has arrived to God's church, to Holy Faith, today we have received a new life, and a new hope.

Today redemption is in the air, it is around us, and inside of us. Today we celebrate a God who was humiliated, spat on, severely beaten, condemned for a crime He did not commit, nailed on a

wooden cross for our sins, a God who died for us on Good Friday, but today he has defeated death and death has no power over him and over believers. Let the church say Amen!

Early in the morning the women found an empty tomb, the same Jesus, whose body was put to rest in a borrowed tomb, came back to life on this day! Halleluiah!

His resurrection sent a strong message to the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the Scribes, the skeptical, those who wanted Jesus crucified. Today the Lord's Resurrection is also sending a strong message to all nonbelievers, to those self-proclaimed atheists, to all living creatures on earth and in the universe, through e-mail, facebook, tweeter, and linkedin that God is alive! Halleluiah!

Jesus has risen! Our God lives, He has obtained victory over death for those who believe and He is seated on His heavenly throne at the right hand of the Father waiting to return for us.

Today we are celebrating a living God, a God who dwells in the Spirit, the author of the Universe, and the giver of life. This is the day that the Lord has made, says the psalm, let us rejoice and be glad in it!

This is a blessed day for all Christians, a day of rejoice for all believers; a new beginning for all God's children.

Listen what the Bible says in John 1:12 "But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God..."

Paul says in Colossians 2:12 "Having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead."

Jesus says in Mark 16:16 "Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned."

And Paul says in Roman 6:4 "We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life."

Now, let me clarify this concept of baptism. The fact that we have received the Sacrament of Baptism does not mean that it ensures our salvation. Baptism is important; it gives us entry into the Body of Christ, the Church, and enables us to become children of God, but this is just the first step toward Salvation. Through baptism, we die the old sinful life and receive eternal life, but this one act does not guarantee our eternal presence in the Kingdom of God.

Many Baptized Christians live their life as though they are already in heaven. They believe that their baptism is their passport to God's Kingdom and that they do not need to read the Bible, attend worship or to know in an intimate way the Jesus we are celebrating today.

Listen beloved brothers and sister, without a personal intimate relationship with Jesus there is no entrance into heaven.

You don't have to take my word for it; listen to what Jesus says in Matthew 7:21 "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven."

And what is the will of God? The will of God, is that you and I build a relationship with His Son Jesus, through daily prayer, reading the Bible, participating in the Eucharist, and sharing our time, talent and treasure through His church.

In the Book of Common Prayer, at the beginning of the funeral service we read, "I am Resurrection and I am Life, says the Lord. Whoever has faith in me shall have life, even though he dies. And everyone who has life, and has committed himself to me in faith, shall not die for ever."

What we read here is that eternal life comes from a committed relationship with Jesus. It is not enough to be a Christian.

I encourage you not to take this celebration lightly because it is not only the resurrection of Christ that we are celebrating this morning, we are also celebrating our own resurrection.

We are celebrating that through Christ's death and resurrection we have been chosen to be holy and blameless, that we have a destiny as God's chosen children, that through His blood we have

received forgiveness; that we are all included in God's family, sealed by the Holy Spirit, and that we have a guaranteed inheritance into his Kingdom.

Let me encourage you to express your praise to the One who gave His life for you. Express your praise to the One whose grace has provided every spiritual blessing we have talked about today and let your life, let Holy Faith be a celebration of the goodness of God not only on Easter Sunday, but as long as we shall live!

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