

Dear Friends,

“The Resurrection of Jesus is the crowning truth of our faith in Christ, a faith believed and lived as the central truth by the first Christian community; handed on as fundamental by Tradition; established by the documents of the New Testament; and preached as an essential part of the Paschal mystery along with the cross...”

(Catechism of the Catholic Church, #638)

How do we pass on the central belief of our faith that Jesus Christ suffered, died and on the third day rose again for the salvation of the world? From the very beginning of the Church, Easter has been seen as the feast of all feasts. Saint Athanasius called it “The Great Sunday.” Our entire liturgical year is centered upon the celebration of Easter; it always has been, it always will be. The central truth of our faith must be, however, passed on in an authentic way from one generation to the next.

In the earliest years of the Church, the Christian community found its greatest joy in seeing new people baptized into Christ Jesus. The community gathered all night long in a vigil of scripture reading, song and prayer while the catechumens were being baptized in the baptistery, which was in a building separate from the church itself. Finally, at dawn, the doors of the church would burst open with a loud bang and the catechumens, led by the bishop, would enter into the church with the whole community and together they would sing the hymn proclaiming, “Christ has risen from the dead! Alleluia!” The aroma of the Chrism filled the Church as the newly baptized, still wet from the water of baptism; still overjoyed by the experience of death to sin and new life in Christ, joyfully united with the community in the celebration of the Eucharist.

Today, the Church is packed with guests who have traveled to be with us. We welcome many people into our sanctuary whom we have not seen in quite some time. We have Easter egg hunts; we search for candy hidden throughout the house. We have big meals with our families. What kind of tradition are we passing on? How does our celebration of Easter, the

central truth of our Christian faith, inspire future generations to grow up to live as people of faith?

Easter is our celebration of Jesus' resurrection from the dead. How do we experience this greatest of all miracles, this feast of all feasts? This weekend we have welcomed Roxanne Wendt, who was baptized last night at the Easter Vigil, Lisa Golembiewski, who converted to Catholicism, and Jennifer Wolny and Kevin Ross, who were confirmed as adults into our faith. In parishes throughout the world, thousands upon thousands of new Catholic Christians have entered into the Church, they now live as members of the Body of Christ alive and present in the world.

You see, the rich Tradition of our Church is still proclaiming the central truth of our faith, that Jesus Christ has risen from the dead for the salvation of the world by offering the new life of Baptism, Confirmation, and First Holy Communion to an entirely new generation of Christians. They, in turn, bring new life, new vitality and the light of Christ's love into our Church, into our world.

These new Christians (also known as Neophytes) need all of us who claim the title Catholic and Christian, to continue revealing the central truth of our faith experienced in our own lives: all the joys and sorrows, the high points and low points, the intimacy and divisions we have known in our own journey of faith.

My hope is that our celebration of Easter will be blessed with the deepest of joys; joys so deep that we will know just by seeing each other that the Christ has risen within us and has called us to share the light of life in God's eternal kingdom.

Happy Easter,
Fr. Tim Seigel