

Easter Message from Bishop Bower 2024

Christ is risen! Alleluia! Alleluia!

Beloved we come to the holiest day of the Christian year, the Resurrection of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. It is no accident that the holiest day of the Christian year is one of tremendous joy and celebration. Unlike other religions and philosophies, our Christian faith is based on God loving us so much that He would both go to the cross for our sake, but even more so, He rises again and gives us hope of our own Resurrection.

This is a tremendous mystery of faith that Jesus is both all human and all divine. But as we see in the events that unfold, both elements are on full display. The crucifixion displays our Lord's humanity, that they could nail mortal flesh to the cross. And the Resurrection shows our Lord's divinity. For only God Himself could or would go to the cross to take away our sins, and then rise again to give us life immortal. What amazing love He has for us!

This feast that we call Easter, (called "Pascha" which is a reference to the Passover by the Eastern Orthodox), is at once both solemn and joyful. But we must be cautioned not to allow it to become too familiar. Indeed, whenever we read the different accounts in the Bible of the Resurrection, it is important to note that none of the sacred authors utilize the framework of either the different Jewish interpretations of life after death, nor do they employ those of Greek or Roman thought. Instead, we hear a very dramatic account of a real and physical Resurrection of Jesus that would have scandalized the ancient world.

Therefore, the Resurrection of Christ marks a change in the narrative of all civilizations. That God would become a man, would live, and teach among us, would suffer, and die in our place, and then to rise again on the third day, is beyond our human comprehension. This is something new. Something different from all the old mythologies and even in Judaism itself. Just like in His incarnation, His holy birth, we have God Himself affirming both the spiritual and the physical aspects of His creation. The very real and physical Resurrection of Jesus shows us that God does not give up on any aspect of His creation, but rather He raises it up, and bestows on it everlasting life.

This is the reason that Easter is the "feast of feasts" in the Christian year. It provides us the basis for hope. We repeatedly say "no" to God, either directly or subtly, this is called sin. But even in our sinful state, God still gives us hope because He alone transcends our human limitations, to allow us to repent of our sins and abide with Him.

And for this reality we exclaim "Christ is risen! Alleluia! Alleluia!" and respond, "He is risen indeed! Alleluia! Alleluia!" on this great day. The first part of each is the acknowledgement of the truth of the Resurrection and we follow it up with that shout of

unmitigated joy and praise to God, Alleluia! For on what greater occasion could we ever offer our praise to God who has given mankind salvation. May this ancient phrase stir our hearts and move us to be witnesses of the reality of the Resurrection to all that we encounter.

God bless you this Easter with the joy of the Resurrection, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

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