



Homily – Easter Vigil 2011 (A) ⁱ

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*Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels
April 23, 2011*

My Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, and especially you, my Dear Catechumens:

We rejoice tonight with the universal Church! Christ has risen! His radiant light fills the world! The darkness has vanished forever!

We have been following our Lord throughout this Holy Week.

We have followed him from the gates of Jerusalem. We were in the Upper Room on Holy Thursday, where he gave us the Eucharist, the priesthood and the example of his love. With the apostles, we tried to watch and pray with him in his agony in Gethsemane. Like them, we abandoned him and followed at a distance as he carried his cross to Golgotha, the Place of the Skull.

When he died, as we witnessed once again this Good Friday, the earth quaked and the veil in the Temple was torn. And we watched while his friends prepared his body for burial with sad, tender care. We kept vigil after the soldiers secured his tomb with a large stone and closed it.

But the story of Jesus does not end there.

In the Gospel we have just heard: There is another earthquake. The angel of the Lord descends and rolls away the stone from the tomb.

“He is not here! For he has risen as he said! Come and see the place where he lay!”
Christ has risen.

My brothers and sisters, the angel’s joyful words are meant for us tonight.

Jesus Christ is alive! He is not in the place where they laid him! The chains of death could not hold him!

Tonight, the whole world rejoices in the new creation. As night passes to day, so Jesus has passed from death to life. He has risen from the dead, as he said!

This is the great truth of our faith, my brothers and sisters. If Christ had not been raised from the dead, our preaching and faith would be in vain, as St. Paul said.ⁱⁱ But it is true: He has been raised!

His resurrection is the “proof” God provides to assure our hope — that Christ’s Gospel and teachings are true.

By raising Jesus from the dead, God shows us that his love is stronger than sin and death! He gives us the proof we need to trust in the Gospel — that whoever believes in Christ has eternal life. That if we eat his flesh and drink his blood, he will raise us up on the last day.ⁱⁱⁱ

So the resurrection is not an event from the past. This event continues to open our lives to eternity — that all men and women might walk in the newness of life.

That is the message of the readings we hear tonight.

The readings and psalms we have just heard take us back to before the world was made, the beginning of creation, the creation of the earth. And they show us how in God’s loving plan, history unfolds in figures and signs until finally the stone is rolled away and the tomb is found to be empty.

My brothers and sisters, the history of salvation does end there. No. It continues in my life and in yours! It continues in the life of every person who is baptized into Christ’s death and raised alive to God!

So let me say a few words to the elect.

My dear elect, tonight as you receive the grace of the sacrament of baptism and the grace of the sacrament of confirmation, you will join this great stream of salvation history. You will draw water joyfully from the springs of salvation!

We welcome you into the family of God! You will now be our brothers and sisters, new children of light! Heirs of God and fellow heirs of Christ in the hope of eternal life.^{iv}

I pray for you tonight, my dear elect. I pray that the light of Christ will dispel every darkness in your hearts and minds. Let his Word be always a lamp to your feet and a light for your path.

I pray that you will always grow deeper in this beautiful friendship with Jesus Christ.

You are called now to be witnesses to his resurrection. You are called to testify to the difference that his resurrection makes in your lives!

Worship the Risen Lord as Mary Magdalene does in the Gospel! Listen to his call in your lives! You are especially in our prayers tonight.

So my brothers and sisters, our prayer tonight is a prayer of joy and hope. May the Risen Christ be our burning light and love as we go out to the world, with our personal commitment to the Gospel, telling the people of our times that *Christ is risen!*
Truly he is risen!

So on this holy night, when the angel shows us the empty tomb, let us ask the intercession of our Blessed Mother, our Lady of the Angels, the patroness of this great cathedral and of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles.

May she help all of us to find the joy and peace of the Risen Christ in our hearts and in our homes and in our city, and in our Church, this Easter Season and always.

ⁱ Readings: Gen. 1:1–2:2; 22:1–18; Exod. 14:15–15:1; Isa. 54:5–14; 55:1–11; Bar. 3:9–15, 32–4:4; Ezek. 36:16–28; Rom. 6:3–11; Matt. 28:1–10.

ⁱⁱ 1 Cor. 15:14.

ⁱⁱⁱ John 3:15; 6:40.

^{iv} Eph. 5:8; Rom. 8:17; Tit. 3:7.