

Monty & Eltham

The Catholic Parishes of
St Francis Xavier & Our Lady Help of Christians



We acknowledge the Wurundjeri people who are the traditional custodians of this land and pay respect to the elders past, present and emerging of the Kulin Nation.

Gospel Reflection:

The final two verses of last Sunday's reading seemed to bring John's gospel to a formal conclusion. But as we see today, there's a whole extra chapter after that, with a similar ending (not included in the reading). Scholars remain divided about the authorship of this apparent appendix, but it has sufficient similarities to the language and style of the overall gospel to lay claim to Johannine authenticity.

Apart from the conclusion, the entire chapter is allocated as today's gospel, with the option of a shortened version. The full reading falls into two clear parts. The first recounts an appearance of the risen Lord to the disciples in Galilee, the second reports on Peter's rehabilitation after his threefold denial. This latter account is omitted from the shorter text. While pastoral reasons might favour the abbreviated version, it's a pity for the community not to hear the deeply personal story of Peter's forgiveness and commissioning. It's never heard on any other Sunday.

Matthew is the only other evangelist to locate an appearance of the risen Lord in Galilee, but his is at a mountain, not by the lakeside. Luke is the only other evangelist to record a miraculous catch of fish, but he situates it at the beginning of Jesus' ministry when Jesus calls his first disciples. How these stories interrelate is an intriguing question.

Both parts of today's gospel are attractive and engaging. They present scenes of human intimacy within the larger matrix of the divine mission. They deserve to be delivered with warmth and affection.

Break Open the Word 2022

Fr Terry says Thank You

Another chance for us to come together and celebrate the fifteen year journey we have shared with Fr Terry. Our celebrations were cut short by COVID restrictions, which are now removed, so let us take the opportunity to make this a real community celebration.

We all need a lift coming out of COVID so come along and join Fr Terry and each other in one of the two events organised using TryBooking.

Saturday 21 May

7pm - 10pm in the SFX Parish Hall

www.trybooking.com/BZBIR

Sunday 22 May

12:30pm - 3pm at the Monty-Eltham RSL

www.trybooking.com/BZBJF

Any concerns please call: Noel (0421 016 105),
Patsy (0429 439 675) or Vinka (0418 345 954)



This parish has a commitment to ensuring the safety of children and vulnerable people in our community.

For more information visit pol.org.au/eltham or pol.org.au/montmorency.

We support the recommendations of the Royal Commission into institutional abuse and pray for all the survivors.



PARISH TEAM & INFORMATION

OUR PEOPLE & OUR CONTACT DETAILS



Parish Priest

Michael Sierakowski - **Moderator**

michael.sierakowski@cam.org.au

Parish Office

86 Mayona Road

9435 4742

Mon - Fri 9am-3pm

montmorency@cam.org.au

Kate Kogler:

Parish Secretary

eltham@cam.org.au

Peter Williams:

Child Safety Officer

SFX&OLHC.ChildSafety@cam.org.au

Website:

www.pol.org.au/montmorency

www.pol.org.au/eltham

(pol stands for Parish OnLine)

Facebook:

[St Francis Xavier Parish Montmorency](#)

Monty & Eltham Newsletter & Facebook items:

eltham@cam.org.au

Schools

St Francis Xavier Primary School

Principal: Philip Cachia: 9435 8474

principal@sfxmontmorency.catholic.edu.au

www.sfxmontmorency.catholic.edu.au

Holy Trinity Primary School

Principal: Vince Bumpstead: 9431 0888

principal@htelthamnth.catholic.edu.au

www.htelthamnth.catholic.edu.au

Our Lady Help of Christians Primary School

Principal: Patrick Green: 9439 7824

school@olhceltham.catholic.edu.au

www.olhceltham.catholic.edu.au

RECONCILIATION

available upon request

please call the Parish Office 9435 4742

Collections: 17 April 2022

Community	Thanksgiving	Presbytery
OLHC	\$1,192.00	\$2,093.60
SFX	\$1,713.00	\$1,864.70

Monty & Eltham Calendar of Events

Saturday 30

12:00pm Baptism - Sierra, Matteo Montmorency

2:00pm Kadasig AGM Montmorency

6:00pm Mass & Confirmations Montmorency

Sunday 1 May

8:30am Mass & Confirmations Montmorency

10:00am Mass & Confirmations Eltham

12:00pm Baptism - Mia, Willow, Zayn, James Eltham

Monday 2

11:00am Funeral: Zara Bucknell Eltham

Tuesday 3

9:30am Mass Montmorency

10:00am Craft Group Montmorency

11:00am Prayer Shawl Ministry Eltham

Wednesday 4

6:30am Meditation Montmorency

9:30am Liturgy of the Word with Communion Eltham

10:30am ASRC Food Collection Montmorency

1:00pm Small Church Community Montmorency

7:30pm Small Church Community Montmorency

Thursday 5

9:30am Liturgy of the Word with Communion Montmorency

11:00am Funeral Mass: Rudolf Plavcak Montmorency

Friday 6

9:30am Mass Eltham

Saturday 7

12:00pm Baptism - Aurora, Billie, Maverick, Evelyn Montmorency

6:00pm Mass & Confirmations Montmorency

Sunday 8

8:30am Mass Montmorency

10:00am Mass Eltham

Tuesday 10

9:30am Mass Montmorency

Wednesday 11

6:30am Meditation Montmorency

9:30am Liturgy of the Word with Communion Eltham

10:30am ASRC Food Collection Montmorency

Thursday 12

9:30am Liturgy of the Word with Communion Montmorency

Friday 13

9:30am Mass Eltham

Saturday 14

12:00pm Baptism - Remi Montmorency

6:00pm Mass & Confirmations Montmorency

Sunday 15

8:30am Mass Montmorency

10:00am Mass & Confirmations Eltham

12:00pm Baptism - Aria, Annika, Billy, Cecilia Eltham

Tuesday 17

9:30am Mass Montmorency

Support

Montmorency Parish
by giving with CDFpay

Simply scan the QR code with your mobile phone and in a few easy steps you can quickly and securely give to your parish.



Support

Eltham Parish
by giving with CDFpay

Simply scan the QR code with your mobile phone and in a few easy steps you can quickly and securely give to your parish.





Let us pray for all those who have gone before us marked with the sign of faith ...

Montmorency

For those whose anniversaries are at this time:
Anthony Posar, Brian Sheehan

For those in need of healing, remembering especially:
Mona, Rita Bevanda, Kim Brisbane, Alana Foulds, Debbie Edgley (nee Vanderwert), Kate Lagerewskij, Melanie Lam, Frances McDonald, Andrew Pighin, Agnatha Spina

Eltham

For those whose anniversaries are at this time:
Bryan Gillard

For those in need of healing, remembering especially:
Violetta, Elisabeth Edwards, Fiona Rogers, Rosemary Scully, Ian Sturman, Sarah Thompson

To include an anniversary please contact Parish Office 9435 4742 or eltham@cam.org.au.



Congratulations to all who celebrate their sacraments this weekend:

Saturday 30 April

St Francis Xavier, 12:00pm

Matteo De Fazio

Baptism

Sierra Lenthall

Baptism

St Francis Xavier, 6:00pm

Magnum Chateau

Confirmation

Aimee Marulli

Confirmation

Millie Pilbeam

Confirmation

Campbell Rooks

Confirmation

Ewan Ross

Confirmation

Ryder Rozon

Confirmation

Stephanie Rujak

Confirmation

Eva Toner

Confirmation

Sunday 1 May

St Francis Xavier, 8:30am

Lily Dunn

Confirmation

Our Lady Help of Christians, 10am

Oliver Blazzkowski

Confirmation

Ainslie Demunck

Confirmation

Matthew Galgano

Confirmation

Darcy Tsirbas

Confirmation

Lola Verde

Confirmation

Our Lady Help of Christians, 12:00pm

Mia Clay

Baptism

Willow Clay

Baptism

Zayn Kaplun

Baptism

James Pucek

Baptism



Prison Fellowship Australia
RESTORING LIVES INSIDE OUT

Prayer Diary

Saturday 30

Prison Fellowship International is a global ministry with ministries in 116 countries and more than 33,000 volunteers. Today please pray for the ministry of Prison Fellowship: Mongolia and for the team serving the prisons, inmates and families. PF Mongolia are involved in visiting prisons and carrying out discipleship programs. They also were instrumental in initiating vocational training in two prisons which became livelihood programs where people in prison could generate income to send to their families.

Sunday 1 May

Please pray for Ian Whitehill as he speaks today at St Alban's Hamlyn Heights. Pray that the church community here would be encouraged and well informed about the ministry reaching people in prison with the hope of the Gospel.

Monday 2

Join with people from across Victoria this morning as we pray together in support of this ministry of hope for so many people living in need of real hope.

Theme: The letter-writing ministry

Zoom Meeting ID: 861 5107 6709. **Passcode:** 458560.

Tuesday 3

Pray for the two volunteers visiting residents in Thomas Embling Hospital today. Give thanks also that their work may soon expand to include another unit of the hospital housing more permanent residents.

Wednesday 4

Pray for Laura Collins, our Program Coordinator, as she takes some well-earned long service leave and visits family in the US now that the restrictions have been lifted enabling overseas travel.

Thursday 5

This week please pray for the inmates and staff at the Langi Kal Kal Prison. This facility is a minimum-security prison farm providing opportunities for people here to work and learn new skills.

Friday 6

Following the Easter Biscuit Bake program, we have had more requests for letters from people in prison. Pray for our letter-writing ministry and the volunteers who participate in this. Give thanks for the encouragement people in prison receive from these letters.

Roster for WEEKEND 7/8 May 2022

Capuana, Marisa	PRYR
Dopheide, Marlis	Eucharistic Minister
Frediani, Gabriella	Altar Society
French, Jossie	W8:30
Haines, Jan-Marie	Eucharistic Minister
Hannon, Kevin & Genni	ASRC
Heyhoe, Margaret	Commentator
Kenny, Michael	W6:00
Kulkens, Mark	W6:00
Leahy Family	Pilgrim Rosary Statue
Leahy, Michelle	Reader
Love, Philip	W8:30
Turnbull, Pauline & Mark	Hospitality OLHC



Resurrection

A Feast of Hope

Easter Sunday

In a homily offered on Easter Sunday 2019, Father Richard Rohr shared the good news of the resurrection:

The Brazilian writer and journalist Fernando Sabino (1923–2004) wrote, “In the end, everything will be [all right]. If it’s not [all right], it’s not the end.” That’s what today is all about, “Everything will be okay in the end.”

The message of Easter is not primarily a message about Jesus’ body, although we’ve been trained to limit it to this one-time “miracle.” We’ve been educated to expect a lone, risen Jesus saying, “I rose from the dead; look at me!” I’m afraid that’s why many people, even Christians, don’t really seem to get too excited about Easter. If the message doesn’t somehow include us, humans don’t tend to be that interested in theology. Let me share what I think the real message is: *Every message about Jesus is a message about all of us*, about humanity. Sadly, the Western church that most of us were raised in emphasized the individual resurrection of Jesus. It was a miracle that we could neither prove nor experience, but that we just dared to boldly believe.

But there’s a great secret, at least for Western Christians, hidden in the other half of the universal church. In the Eastern Orthodox Church — in places like Syria, Turkey, Greece, and Egypt — Easter is not usually painted with a solitary Jesus rising from the dead. He’s always surrounded by crowds of people — both haloed and unhaloed. In fact, in traditional icons, he’s pulling people out of Hades. Hades is not the same as hell, although we put the two words together, and so we grew up reciting in the creed that “Jesus descended into hell.”

Instead, Hades is simply the place of the dead. There’s no punishment or judgment involved. It’s just where a soul waits for God. But we neglected that interpretation. So the Eastern Church was probably much closer to the truth that the resurrection is a message about humanity. It’s a message about history. It’s a corporate message, and it includes you and me and everyone else. If that isn’t true, it’s no wonder that we basically lost interest.

Today is the feast of hope, direction, purpose, meaning, and community. We’re all in this together. The cynicism and negativity that our country and many other countries have descended into show a clear example of what happens when people do not have hope. If it’s all hopeless, we individually lose hope too. Easter is an announcement of a common hope. When we sing in the Easter hymn that Christ destroyed death, that means the death of all of us. It’s not just about Jesus; it’s to humanity that God promises, “Life is not ended, it merely changes,” as we say in the funeral liturgy. That’s what happened in Jesus, and that’s what will happen in us. In the end, everything will be all right. History is set on an inherently positive and hopeful tangent.

<https://cac.org/a-feast-of-hope-2022-04-17/>



Resurrection

Universal Restoration

Father Richard writes about the early church's belief in universal restoration and the eventual victory of Divine Love:

A number of Church Fathers during the first four centuries of Christianity believed in what's called *apokatastasis*, or "universal restoration" (Acts 3:21). They believed that the real meaning of Christ's resurrection was that God's love was so perfect and so victorious that it would finally triumph in every single person's life. They were so sure about this that their thought partially gave rise to the idea of purgatory as a place. In the dying process or even after death, God's infinite love can and will *still* get at us! They felt no soul could resist the revelation of such infinite love. (Most Catholics were never taught that the original folk belief in purgatory represented an overwhelming sense of God's always-victorious love and mercy. Like many great mysteries, it deteriorated into its exact opposite, a place of punishment — which is all a worldview of scarcity can devise.)

From my reading of the history of the Catholic Church and its dogma, universal restoration was never condemned as heretical. We didn't have to believe in it, but we certainly could. Isn't it interesting that we Catholics canonize saints, pronouncing them to be in heaven beyond a shadow of a doubt, yet this same Church has never declared that a single person is in hell or purgatory, not even Judas or Hitler? The Church might just be holding out for a possible universal restoration.

The true meaning of the raising of Jesus is that God will turn all our human crucifixions into resurrection. This is a social, historical victory for God. Part of why we could not accept it is that we want individual people to "get their due." But the real biblical message is that God is loving history much more than only loving individuals. This should have been apparent from YHWH's relationship with Israel which was always corporate, both in its covenants and in its chastisements. We are all in this together, biblically speaking.

In her thirteenth showing, Julian of Norwich (1343–c. 1416) asked Jesus, "In fear and trembling, 'Oh, good Lord, how can all be well when great harm has come to your creatures through sin?' And here I wanted, if I dared, to have some clearer explanation to put my mind at rest." And to this our blessed Lord ... taught me ... "Since I have brought good out of the worst-ever evil, I want you to know, by this, that I shall bring good out of all lesser evils, too."

Could God's love really be that great and that universal? I believe it is. Love is the lesson, and God's love is so great that God will finally teach it to all of us. We'll finally surrender, and God will win in the end. That will be God's "justice," which will swallow up our lesser versions. God — Love — does not lose!

<https://cac.org/universal-restoration-2022-04-18/>

Prayers of the Faithful for 1 May 2022 - Third Sunday of Easter

Leader: Brothers and sisters, fulfilled by the love of our risen Lord, we turn to God with our intentions.

We pray that, under the guidance of Pope Francis, we can see a renewal in our Church, and that the Holy Spirit will lead all members of the Church in the way of love, truth, generosity and justice.

Let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, hear our prayer.

We pray for all of those in leadership positions and those standing for election: that they can work together in civility and co-operation; looking for what unites us, rather than what divides us.

Let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, hear our prayer.

We pray for the suffering people of Ukraine and all of those who have become refugees, in other war-torn regions of the world: that war will cease and peace can be restored.

Let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, hear our prayer.

We pray for all of our parishioners who can no longer attend Mass because of infirmity, illness or being in residential care and those on our sick list. We remember them and thank them for their contributions to our parish.

Let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, hear our prayer.

At a time when many parishioners are experiencing financial difficulties of their own, we give thanks for their generosity in their support of others in need through: Project Compassion, the Asylum Seekers' Resource Centre and the upcoming St Vincent de Paul Winter Appeal.

Let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, hear our prayer.

We pray for those who have died recently, and remember *Anthony Posar & Brian Sheehan* whose anniversary occurs at this time. May they rest in peace.

Let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, hear our prayer.

Leader: God our Father, your Son showed himself as risen from the dead. Hear our prayers and help us to be ever present to those in need, with faith in your great power. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen

Food Drive for the ASRC Foodbank



Thank you for making a difference to people seeking asylum by providing one of the most basic human rights: food. ASRC Foodbank currently provides free groceries to around 1000 people every week, most of whom have no income and no work rights. EVERY donation makes a difference.

TOP 10 MOST NEEDED ITEMS



1. tuna in oil 400g



2. tinned tomatoes 400g

3. raw, unsalted nuts



4. honey *small bottles*

5. spices *turmeric, cumin, chilli*

6. dried fruit

7. disposable razors



8. dishwashing liquid 500/750ml

9. shampoo +conditioner 350/400ml

10. laundry powder 1kg max



inquiries (03)9326 6066
email donatefood@asrc.org.au

Please note that the ASRC does not need baked beans, tinned soup or tinned spaghetti.

We are looking for a few more people to be involved in providing hospitality after the Sunday 10am Mass – we would like to ‘spread the load’ a bit.

Hospitality involves providing some cakes, sandwiches or other delicacies of your choice and helping to serve the tea/coffee and also tidying up. You do not have to make the coffee!

If you would like to join the crew, please put your name down on the sign-up sheet in the gathering area. Kathleen



Mother's Day Pamphlets

We've no sooner completed our Easter celebrations and next week we are celebrating Mother's day. The Montmorency conference of SVDP have some booklets that may be of interest to parishioners that will assist us in celebrating and preparing for Mother's day. Pamphlets are in the front foyer near the entrance doors. Some of the pamphlets include:

- Prayers of a Catholic Mother
- Prayers for Expectant Mothers – Blessing the Child Within
- Celebrate Mothers – Prayers and Reflections on Motherhood
- Prayers for a New Mother
- Celebrate Grandparents – Reflections honour of Grandparents

We hope that you enjoy the selection. Please feel free to browse all the pamphlets. A gold coin donation in the poor boxes located at the front and side entrances will help defray costs.

Are you interested in becoming a volunteer with St Vincent de Paul through our conference, perhaps in the Vinnies shop in Briar Hill, or in some other administrative capacity? If so please contact Mike on 0417 221 245 or the Parish Office.

The Montmorency conference is continuing their work during this time. If you need assistance call 1800 305 330 Monday to Friday between 10am and 3pm.



St Vincent de Paul Society
good works

Joan Chittister **osb** is an American Benedictine, a Practical Theologian, and embodies the voice of wisdom and experience.

We are proud to announce that Joan will be the guest speaker at a series of events across Australia during May and June 2022.

Garratt Publishing is a proud supporter of these events, and we look forward to welcoming you.



EVENT DETAILS – MELBOURNE

When: Thursday May 12, 2022

Time: 7.00-9.00 pm (AEST)

Where: Melbourne Town Hall, 90-130 Swanston Street, Melbourne, Vic 3000

Ticket Price: \$25 each

<https://www.trybooking.com/events/landing/557382>



JOIN US FOR A SERIES OF ZOOM EVENTS FOCUSED ON CHURCH RENEWAL

Yarra Theological Union (YTU), Garratt Publishing and Australasian Catholic Coalition for Church Reform (ACCCR) are pleased to offer a series of ground-breaking, essential seminars as the Australian Church and People of God journey to the second (and final) assembly of the *Australian Plenary Council*, and prepare for the *Synod on Synodality*.

Held over four Monday evenings in May, the *Building the Church We Need* Zoom series will focus on synodality, governance and leadership of the Church in the context of Church renewal. An outstanding panel of local and international experts will offer insights into the Plenary, the preparations for the Pope's Synod of Bishops, and initiatives globally in places such as Germany, Ireland and more.

Particular focus will also be given to the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference's commissioned *The Light from the Southern Cross* report, which offers an inclusive approach to governance – with a clear ethos of synodality.

EVENT DETAILS

WHEN: Monday Evenings – May 2, 9, 16 & 23

TIME: 7:30-9:00pm (AEST)*

WHERE: Online via Zoom (link will be provided upon booking)

COST: \$22.00 incl. GST (covers all four sessions). Excludes TryBooking fee.

BOOKINGS: via TryBooking: <https://www.trybooking.com/events/landing/896730>

SESSION DETAILS

MONDAY 2 MAY, 7.30-8.30pm (AEST)*

Building the Church We Need: Synodality and Leadership

Dr Mary McAleese, former President of Ireland, Chancellor of Dublin University, and civil and canon lawyer; in conversation with **Fr Christopher Monaghan** CP, President, Yarra Theological College.



MONDAY 9 MAY, 7.30-9.00pm (AEST)*

Building the Church We Need: The Challenges

Professor Massimo Faggioli, prominent international commentator on Church history and governance; and **Dr Cecilia Francisco-Tan**, theologian, specialising in authority and contemporary pastoral leadership.



MONDAY 16 MAY, 7.30-9.00pm (AEST)*

Building the Church We Need: A Church for all Australians

Emeritus Professor John Warhurst, Chair of Concerned Catholics Canberra Goulburn; and **Claire Victory**, National President of St Vincent de Paul Society. John and Claire are Plenary Council members.



MONDAY 23 MAY, 7.30-9.00pm (AEST)*

Building the Church We Need: Expectations of the Plenary Council and the Synod on Synodality

Dr Elissa Roper, theologian specialising in synodality; and **Francis Sullivan**, Chair, Mater Health, former CEO of the Catholic Truth, Justice and Healing Council, and Plenary Council member.



*Starting times around Australia and New Zealand:

ACT, NSW, QLD, TAS, VIC: 7.30pm; NT, SA: 7.00pm; WA: 5.30pm; NZ: 9.30pm

Gospel: John 21:1-19

Jesus showed himself again to the disciples. It was by the Sea of Tiberias, and it happened like this: Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twin, Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee and two more of his disciples were together. Simon Peter said, 'I'm going fishing.' They replied, 'We'll come with you.' They went out and got into the boat but caught nothing that night.

It was light by now and there stood Jesus on the shore, though the disciples did not realise that it was Jesus. Jesus called out, 'Have you caught anything, friends?' And when they answered, 'No', he said, 'Throw the net out to starboard and you'll find something.' So they dropped the net, and there were so many fish that they could not haul it in. The disciple Jesus loved said to Peter, 'It is the Lord.' At these words 'It is the Lord', Simon Peter, who had practically nothing on, wrapped his cloak round him and jumped into the water. The other disciples came on in the boat, towing the net and the fish; they were only about a hundred yards from the land.

As soon as they came ashore they saw that there was some bread there, and a charcoal fire with fish cooking on it. Jesus said, 'Bring some of the fish you have just caught.' Simon Peter went aboard and dragged the net to the shore, full of big fish, one hundred and fifty-three of them; and in spite of there being so many the net was not broken. Jesus said to them, 'Come and have breakfast.' None of the disciples was bold enough to ask, 'Who are you?'; they knew quite well it was the Lord. Jesus then stepped forward, took the bread and gave it to them, and the same with the fish. This was the third time that Jesus showed himself to the disciples after rising from the dead.

After the meal Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon son of John, do you love me more than these others do?' He answered, 'Yes Lord, you know I love you.' Jesus said to him, 'Feed my lambs.' A second time he said to him, 'Simon son of John, do you love me?' He replied, 'Yes, Lord, you know I love you.' Jesus said to him, 'Look after my sheep.' then he said to him a third time, 'Simon son of John, do you love me?' Peter was upset that he asked him the third time, 'Do you love me?' and said, 'Lord, you know everything; you know I love you.' Jesus said to him, 'Feed my sheep.'

'I tell you most solemnly, when you were young you put on your own belt and walked where you liked; but when you grow old you will stretch out your hands, and somebody else will put a belt round you and take you where you would rather not go.'

In these words he indicated the kind of death by which Peter would give glory to God. After this he said, 'Follow me.'



Resurrection —God is with Us through It All

Father Richard shares how we can receive the miracle of new life by embracing our own difficulties and “deaths” as Jesus did.

Death is not only physical dying. Death also means going to the full depths of things, hitting the bottom, going beyond where we're in control. In that sense, we all go through many deaths in our lives, tipping points when we have to ask, "What am I going to do?" Many people turn bitter, look for someone to blame, and close down. Their "death" is indeed death for them because there is no room for growth after that. But when we go into the full depths and death of anything — even, ironically, the depths of our own sin — we can come out the other side transformed, more alive, more open, more forgiving of ourselves and others. And when we come out the other side, we know that we've been led there. We're not holding on; we're being held by a larger force, by a larger source that is not our own. That's what it means to be saved! It means that we've walked through the mystery of transformation.

The miracle of it all — if we are to speak of miracles — is that God has found the most ingenious way to transform the human soul. God uses the very thing that would normally destroy us — the tragic, the sorrowful, the painful, the unjust deaths that lead us all to the bottom of our lives — to transform us. There it is, in one sentence. Are we prepared to trust that?

Jesus' death and resurrection is a statement of how reality works all the time and everywhere. He teaches us that there's a different way to live with our pain, our sadness, and our suffering. We can say, "Woe is me," and feel sorry for ourselves, or we can say, "God is even in this." And that's what Jesus did on Good Friday.

None of us crosses over this gap from death to new life by our own effort, our own merit, our own purity, or our own perfection. Each of us — from pope to president, from princess to peasant — is carried across by unearned grace. Worthiness is never the ticket, only deep desire. With that desire the tomb is always, finally empty, as Mary Magdalene discovered on Easter morning. Death cannot win. We're finally indestructible when we recognize that the thing which could destroy us is the very thing that could enlighten us.

Friends, the Easter feast is a reminder to all of us to open our eyes and our ears and to witness what is happening all around us, all the time, everywhere. God's one and only job description is to turn death into life. That's what God does with every new springtime, every new life, every new season, every new anything. God is the one who always turns death into life, and no one who trusts in this God will ever be put to shame (Psalm 25:3).