

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Shortly after writing this, the bells of another glorious celebration of the Resurrection will peal throughout Christendom. This is a very good thing. The Resurrection of our Lord, unlike any other event in human history, marks our beginning as God's people—it's the beginning of the new creation, where death no longer has dominion. It is history—our history and our story. We ring the bells because, on that day, almost two-thousand years ago His followers found His tomb empty—He was alive. On that day our slavery ended. It was ended forever.

If history, the history of everything, can be divided, then this one event is the dividing point. It separates a world conquered and defeated from a world rescued and redeemed. It separates the new from the old—you from the old. There was a time (a time that will always exist for me) when our calendar reflected this. There was B.C. and there is A.D. That was then, these designations told us. This is now. We live in the A.D. (Anno Domini, Latin for "Year of our Lord"). We live in that half of history in which we know death has been destroyed.

This is now. Now we are people who look over our shoulders and are strengthened by what we see. As we look back, we too see the empty tomb. We see the love of God for us clearly manifest in the Son. We see our destiny as life with God, life with each other as people freed from sin, stands before us as our future reality. It is a reality written by God—written in stone never to be eroded or erased. It is a history writ large in the blood of the Son. We are people of the Resurrection. In Christ, we are people of the new creation.

I leave you with a small excerpt of St. John. Chrysostom's (d. A.D. 407) sermon for the Vigil of Easter. I think these ancient words capture the essence of what the Resurrection has done for us. And so these words of this ancient Church Father:

Let no one fear death, for the Savior's death has set us free.
He that was taken by death has annihilated it!
He descended into Hades and took Hades captive!
He embittered it when it tasted His flesh!
And anticipating this, Isaiah exclaimed: "Hades was embittered when it
 encountered Thee in the lower regions".
It was embittered, for it was abolished!
It was embittered, for it was mocked!
It was embittered, for it was purged!
It was embittered, for it was despoiled!
It was embittered, for it was bound in chains!
It took a body and came upon God!
It took earth and encountered Heaven!
It took what it saw, but crumbled before what it had not seen!
O death, where is thy sting?
O Hades, where is thy victory?

My brothers and sisters, this is the gift: Death has been destroyed. Your death has been destroyed.

A blessed Easter to you all!

Rev. Leonard A. Astrowski, Pastor