

- My dear friends in Christ, on a penitential Wednesday nearly 7 weeks ago we gathered in this church to be marked with ashes as the sign of our repentance of our sins.
- Knowing that we are dust and that unto dust we shall return, we made a promise that day to turn away from sin and be faithful to the Gospel. And thus we began our Lenten pilgrimage.
- Since that time we have made an effort to pray more, fast more, and to give more. We have sought to follow Christ more closely in an effort to grow in holiness and virtue.
- We have tried to change our sinful behaviors, and we have begged for His mercy for those times we have fallen short. Hopefully we are all the holier for our efforts.
- During our Lenten pilgrimage we have also seen the most incredible story unfold for us: a picture painted on the canvas of our liturgies, and it's the most amazing story ever told.
- For the 40 days of Lent we have been following Our Lord as we have been wandering in the Lenten desert. We have seen His miracles, we have witnessed all that Christ has done to show forth His divinity, and we have received His commandments.
- Then last Sunday we heralded Christ as our King with the waving of palms and singing of hosannas as He made His triumphal entry into Jerusalem.
- And on Thursday night we received from our Lord the incomparable and inseparable gifts of the Eucharist and the Priesthood, two of the great signs of our Lord's love for us.
- But the joy that we experienced in that moment quickly faded as we saw our Lord sadly betrayed by one of His closest friends. And thus we followed our Lord to Gethsemane to pray with Him as He suffered His bitter agony in the Garden.
- On Friday we watched with silent horror as He unjustly suffered unspeakable indignities. Yet not one sound of protest did He make. Like a lamb led to the slaughter, our Lord was led to the cross, where He allowed Himself to suffer and die for us.
- And now my friends, on this glorious Easter morning, the tomb where we laid our Lord on Friday now stands empty. The rolled away stone and the burial cloths silently resting in that tomb signal loud and clear that Our Lord is alive! Christ has triumphed over sin and death!
- Thus, before the Gospel today we sang *Victimae Paschali Laudes*, the Easter sequence, which reminds us of the great triumph our Lord has secured by rising from the dead!
- Indeed, Christians have been singing this song on Easter for 1000 years because it so perfectly captures the spirit of this most solemn and joyful of feasts:

*Christians, to the Paschal Victim offer your thankful praises! A Lamb the sheep redeems;
Christ, who only is sinless, reconciles sinners to the Father. Death and life have contended
In that combat stupendous: The Prince of Life, who died, reigns immortal.*

*Speak, Mary, declaring what you saw, wayfaring. "The tomb of Christ, who is living,
The glory of Jesus' resurrection; bright angels attesting, the shroud and napkin resting.
Yes, Christ my hope is arisen; To Galilee He goes before you."*

*Christ indeed from death is risen, our new life obtaining.
Have mercy, victor King, ever reigning!
Amen. Alleluia!*

- Think, my friends: the hope that first dawned when the Christ child was born to a virgin on a cold December night in Bethlehem is now brought to its fulfillment. And as His chosen sons and daughters, we are free to partake of this glorious gift of salvation that He has won for us.
- Now all that remains is that we live as if we truly believe these glorious mysteries of our faith! All that remains, my friends, is that we cooperate with God's grace and allow ourselves to be transformed by our Lord's resurrection from the dead.
- In Jesus Christ God became man, so that man could become like God. Out of His great love for us, Christ suffered and died the cruel ignominy of the cross in order to save us from our sins.
- As the heirs to the great promise of eternal life, let us now strive to live our lives in a manner that will make us worthy of the promises of Christ. A blessed Easter to you all.