

## EASTER 2014

### **Theme: What can we say about Easter?**

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What can we say about Easter?

It is the springtime celebration of rebirth, of life's victory over death, of bunnies, butterflies and bonnets.

The first difficulty with this definition is that it only applies for those of us who live in the northern hemisphere:

for those who live down under – Australia, India, South America, and of Africa – Easter comes in the fall, not the spring and nature is dying not being reborn.

And second, such a definition of Easter does not necessarily include Jesus Christ or his resurrection from the dead; it could just as easily describe a pagan or atheistic of spring.

The Christian Feast of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ is, instead, a celebration of God's vindication of the One Crucified on Good Friday.

For Christians, Easter is God's "yes" to Jesus Christ and a resounding "no" to unjust and evil powers who executed him, crucified him.

Easter is God's "yes" to Jesus Christ and his relentless effort to announce God's Kingdom dawning upon the world.

Easter is God making it clear that the divine eye sees and the divine hand is involved in the work of justice in the world – God will not let injustice stand.

Clearly such an understanding of Easter is a far cry from Easter bunnies and a nice spring parade in your Easter Bonnet down Fifth Avenue.

Now far be it from me to suggest, that bunnies – especially the new solid dark chocolate ones – butterflies and bonnets can't be a wonderful part of our Easter celebration.

It's just that bunnies, butterflies and bonnets are not what our Christian Easter is all about.

God had something grander, in fact, something earth-shattering and revolutionary in mind when Jesus was raised from the dead.

We are given a clue as to this purpose in the resurrection story from Matthew Gospel we heard tonight/today.

In fact these same words are told to the disciples twice, once by the risen Jesus himself, so they must be important.

**“Do not be afraid...  
He has been raised from the dead,  
And he is going ahead of you to Galilee,  
There you will see him.”**

No need of fear and he has been raised, but then he goes ahead of you back to Galilee where you will see him.

Galilee is, of course where Jesus and his disciples had come from, where their homes were, where he had conducted almost all of his ministry and preached the Kingdom of God.

Is this text saying, now that God has raised Jesus and, in effect, vindicated and endorsed his message and his ministry, his disciples should go back to Galilee and continue his work there?

Is it saying that the Risen Jesus, having overcome the power of Rome and the Jewish leadership to destroy him, has already returned to Galilee and waits for their return?

Lovely esoteric thought, Father, but what's got to do with us on Easter 2014, here and now?

Consider: if God has already broken the power of death in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, what power of evil, what force of injustice, what weapon of warfare can now stand in our way of continuing Jesus' work?

The resurrection of Jesus Christ has forever changed the equation on the side of God's dream for humanity.

Now we can work for a real distributive justice, as Pope Francis writes, where all God's children have a right to share in the necessities of human existence, a distributive justice that is no mere pipe dream but God's dream.

Now joy and laughter and contentment and security are not privileges to be enjoyed by a wealthy five or ten percent of the population but are the birthright of every child of God.

And now God has shown that sometimes the little people (like a peasant from Galilee nailed to a cross) know better than the religious and political elites in their cathedrals and palaces.

All of this says our own efforts to continue the work of Jesus Christ are charged with new energy, new spirit because of Christ's resurrection, his vindication by God.

And so on this Easter Resurrection Sunday, sisters and brothers, let us praise the God who vindicated Jesus Christ by raising him from the dead.

Let us sing our "Alleluias" to the One who came down on the side of the cause for which Jesus Christ died.

Let us pledge ourselves to continue to proclaim God's Kingdom of peace for the world and justice for all people.

Let's offer the Bread of Life and the Cup of Blessing that give God perfect praise for what has come to be in Christ Jesus the Lord.

Alleluia.