

Some of you may remember that before the pandemic (which you may have heard something about), we used to bring you children to our little chapel in the school to preach the Sunday readings to *you* so *you* could better understand what God is trying to say to all of us. Now that the pandemic has eased, we will be resuming that practice, with special encouragement from Fr. Jeivi.

Speaking about special, why is Easter so special? We have these two special days, Christmas and Easter, the two most special days on the Christian calendar. Of course, on Christmas we celebrate the birth of Jesus. What's so special about Easter? As you may have heard, Jesus rose from the dead on Easter. In fact, you have probably heard this more than once and become so used to hearing it that it might not sound so special anymore. Well, do you know of anyone else who ever did that? Of course, Jesus is the only one in the history of the world who ever rose from the dead. But that's only part of the reason Easter is special. Easter is really why we are Christians, that is, we believe in Jesus, the *Christ*. There's a word. *Christ*. From the Greek meaning anointed one, chosen by God to be our savior. Also Messiah, and the Son of God. Remember, + God the Father, God the *Son*, and God the Holy Spirit. And while it is special, *really* special, to be crucified and then raise from the dead, He is *God*, come down to earth to die for *our* sins. That's why Jesus walked this earth, to suffer and die for us, each one of us, for me & for you & for you & you & you & you & you & you...for all of us, not as a group of people, but for each one of us individually. He knows and loves *each one of us*. He wants to save *each one of us*.

In the Jewish religion the way it was when Jesus walked the earth, year after year the people would bring animals to the priests—doves and sheep and goats and calves. The priests would then kill the animals, sacrificing them to God for the forgiveness of sins. But none of the sacrificed animals ever came back to life. However, Jesus gave up His body as a one-time sacrifice for all our sins because He is God. (Read Psalm 40:6-9 and Hebrews 10:1-14 about the inadequacy of these

animal sacrifices and in Hebrews about how Jesus' sacrifice was perfect.)

As God, why would He want to become a man, who can hurt like a man and suffer and die like a man? Because He loves us. He even went to hell, just like it says in the Apostles Creed, just like everyone did when they died before Jesus died. Not the hell which we think of as punishment for being evil on earth, but the hell which is separation from God. Because of our sinfulness, because we are imperfect beings, because we are all sinners, we cannot achieve everlasting life with God by ourselves. But once Jesus died for our sins, once He descended into hell, He conquered death by rising back to life. He paved the way for all of us to have everlasting life after *we* die. He voluntarily came to earth, suffered, died, and went to hell and back, for *us*, because *He loves us*. *That's* why Easter is the most important day of the year. *That's* why He is our Savior, because He gave up His life to *save* us from an eternity of separation from God. There's another word. *Eternity*. Eternity means forever. He saved us from separation from God *forever*.

How *special* is that! Not the wow-ee! Look at that! He-rose-from-the-dead, pretty-amazing-stuff-huh? kind of special. But how special are *we* to God! How much love does God have for *each and every one of us* that He would do all that for *each and every one of us*! Do you get it? Do you understand? Are you excited? You *should* be excited, because it doesn't matter whether you were stuck at home because of the pandemic for these last two years, or if you could finally be at church on this very special day, like we all should want to be, *that's* why Easter is so important: Jesus suffered and died for each one of us to save each one of us, then rose from the dead because He loves each one of us! That's special enough to be *very* excited.

And that, girls and boys, is the very special lesson in today's readings. Talk to your parents about it.

- From all of the Children's Liturgy of the Word homilists, Michaela, Barbara, Judy, and all prior homilists from years gone by, a Blessed Easter to all of you and your families!
- And please, parents, consider bringing your children to church for their own Children's Liturgy of the Word.
- And girls and boys, after you have all that fun celebrating Easter, don't forget to say a prayer of thanks to God for the good time you had and all the candy you received.

Easter Sunday, 2022, preached at Our Lady of Lourdes Church, Mountainside, NJ on 17 April, 2022 and available YouTube on the Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Church Mountainside channel at the end of the 9:30 AM Easter Sunday Mass.

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