

Sermon for Easter Day
Sunday, April 16, 2017
“Iesus Christos Nika: The Victory!”

I speak to you in the name of the one true God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

If you were here last night for the Vigil Mass, I apologize, because you're going to hear the same sermon, but I want everyone to hear the same Easter message. If you came to the Triduum liturgies and have been following the story of this week, or if you were here last Sunday, you remember I said that Holy Week which just passed is bipolar. It swings like a pendulum between feeling depressing and feeling manic. Well today is the ultimate of manic days. Today is Easter. Though Jesus was crucified, he was not conquered. Today, we see what victory looks like. The instrument of torture has become the vessel for salvation. He who was executed like a criminal has returned a king.

Whenever we feel like we have been defeated, the Easter message reassures us that victory is possible through Christ. His crucifixion seemed like the powers of the world had won, but Easter is the declaration that, No! God is the victor. I was listening to Pope Francis' Easter message early this morning and in his homily he mentioned meeting a little boy who had a terminal illness. The Pope explained that God was willing to spare his own son, but in the end God won. The kid replied to His Holiness, “Yes, but Jesus had a choice. I didn't choose this for myself.” We can't always choose the battles that we must fight in life; we don't even know how long our life is going to be. But the message of Easter is that no matter what the powers of the world try to do to us, in Christ we have the victory. No matter what life has thrown at us, no matter what choices we've made—good or bad—no matter where we are in our lives right now, nothing compares to what Christ did on the Cross. Nothing compares to the gift God gave us in his son. Nothing compares to the victory over death, the grave, and hell that Jesus achieved.

I cannot say this any better than St. John Chrysostom, one of the Fathers of the Early Church. He lived in the 5th Century AD and his Easter Homily still stirs the faithful today. Here are some of his electrifying words:

Excerpts from The Easter Homily of Saint John Chrysostom [some language has been adapted to modern use]

If anyone be devout and loves God, let them enjoy this fair and radiant triumphal feast.

If anyone be a wise servant, let them, rejoicing, enter into the joy of the Lord.

If any have labored long in fasting, let them now receive their recompense.

Enter ye all into the joy of your Lord; and receive ye your reward, both the first, and likewise the second.

Ye rich and poor together, hold ye high festival.

Ye sober and ye heedless, honor ye the day.

Rejoice today, both ye who have fasted and ye who have disregarded the fast.

The table is full-laden; feast ye all sumptuously.

The calf is fatted; let no one go hungry away.

Enjoy ye all the feast of faith: Receive ye all the riches of loving kindness.

Let no one bewail his poverty, for the universal kingdom hath been revealed.

Let no one weep for his iniquities, for pardon hath shone forth from the grave.

Let no one fear death, for the Savior's death hath set us free.

He that was held prisoner of it, hath annihilated it.

By descending into Hell, he made Hell captive.

He angered it when it tasted of his flesh.

And Isaiah, foretelling this, did cry: Hell, said he, was angered, when it encountered thee in the lower regions.

It was angered, for it was abolished.

It was angered, for it was mocked.

It was angered, for it was slain.

It was angered, for it was overthrown.

It was angered, for it was fettered in chains.

It took a body, and met God face to face.

It took earth, and encountered Heaven.

It took that which was seen, and fell upon the unseen.

O Death, where is thy sting? O Hell, where is thy victory? Christ is risen, and thou art overthrown.

Christ is risen, and the demons are fallen.

Christ is risen, and the Angels rejoice.

Christ is risen, and life reigneth.

Christ is risen, and not one dead remains in the grave.

For Christ, being risen from the dead, is become the first-fruits of those who have fallen asleep.

To him be glory and dominion unto ages of ages. Amen.

Christ is risen!

He is risen indeed!

Christ is risen!

He is risen indeed!

Christ is risen!

He is risen indeed!