

In the Name of the Father, and of the ✠ Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

Tombs are a sign of man. Every metropolis, every rural city, even the most remote family farm has a cemetery. Men die. From the time of the first man, death reigned. Men live out their lives anticipating drawing their last breath. It is the just curse, the appropriate sentence, for sin. For men death is inescapable. It is what the Apocalypse calls the “final enemy”. And it is an enemy that man cannot defeat. Living out his days in the shadow of impending death, the entire existence of man is tempered by death.

So the Prophet Isaiah calls it “the surface of the covering cast over all people.” He calls it “the veil that is spread over all nations.” It is death that unites all men of all times. And it has touched you. It has taken the ones you loved. You have seen it’s dark touch at school and in the workplace and among your neighbors.

Scripture knows two deaths. The first is the separation of body and soul, which man calls “physical death.” That is the death that ushers sinful men into the tomb. And Holy Scripture teaches a second death, which is the separation of the soul from God. That death is an eternal death of suffering and unending agony.

Every man who has sinned, you, O sinner, have earned death. Truth be told, death was born into you, inasmuch as you have the flesh you inherited from the first man. And that sin of itself is enough to bring death. But to that sin you have daily added transgressions, the sins that you have committed when you have yielded to temptation. So both the first and the second deaths are justly your sentence. You too are rightly covered by that dark and morbid covering cast over all people. The veil spread over all nations covers you as well.

But for you the Prophet has a Word of hope. For his ancient Promise is a Promise for you: “He will swallow up death forever... the rebuke of His people He will take away from all the earth...” For men living in the shadow of death, that is surely Good News. God Himself will remove the curse. He will swallow up death. He will take death away.

And that, dear Christian, that taking away, that swallowing up, is your great joy this day. For the Mary’s went to the tomb expecting what all mourning family expect – a lifeless body. But beyond all hope, when they arrived at the tomb, it was not sealed as it had been on the Day of Preparation. It was open. And inside, there was a bright angel, who proclaimed the fulfillment of the ancient Promise made through Isaiah.

That angel’s Words are Words of hope, and joy, and strength and comfort for you: “Do not be afraid. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He is risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid Him... go, tell His disciples, and Peter, that He is going before you into Galilee, there you will see Him, as He said to you.”

Could it be? They saw Him arrested, mocked, scourged and crucified. They saw His Body placed in the tomb. They saw the tomb sealed, and the guard placed nearby to prevent tampering. But now that tomb is empty. Now heavenly brightness illumines that dark place of death. And like Isaiah, that angel makes a God-sent Promise: Christ is risen! And like the

Promise of Isaiah, the Promise of that angel is true. For you, Redeemed of Christ, that is Good News. For in that report is forgiveness and life for you, and for all who believe.

The women trembled and were amazed. So should you be. In all time no man has conquered death. The first Adam became a living being. But He died. Christ, the last Adam came. He came through the mysterious portal of the Virgin's womb. He came by angelic proclamation, and Mary conceived by hearing and the power of the Holy Spirit.

God was made Man. The Word became Flesh. The last Adam became a life-giving Spirit. The spiritual is not first, but the natural, and after the spiritual. The first man was of the earth, made of dust. The Second Man is the Lord from heaven. And that Man, God incarnate, Light incarnate, Life incarnate, rendered His life in exchange for yours.

The guilty sentence imposed upon Him was for your sins. The tomb He filled was rightly yours. But He did it for you. He did it in your place. He died your death. In His death all your sins are forgiven, the sins in which you were born, and the sins you have committed. Christ our Passover was sacrificed for us. By His death He purges the old leaven, that you be made a new lump.

He died. But He is not dead. The tomb is empty. That is the joyous report of this bright Easter Morn. Christ is risen! So you keep this feast, not with the leaven of malice or wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. In His resurrection, you are declared righteous and holy, innocent, without spot or blemish, without sin, before God. Death is vanquished for you. So you, dear Christian, you will not die.

So with the women at the tomb, with faithful Isaiah, you may proclaim "Behold, this is our God, we have waited for Him, and He will save us. This is the Lord, we have waited for Him, we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation."

Scripture knows of two births – the first a physical birth, the second a re-birth, a birth from above, Baptismal birth. In the font you are buried with Christ, and you rise with Him to new life. That is the second birth, that is the first resurrection. And you baptized into Him, you who believe in Him, you who have faith in His Name, the second death has no power over you – you will rise in the second resurrection, when the Lord in His glory calls you forth.

Then as His tomb was empty, so will yours be. As His death ended in life, so too yours. In Christ, you will not die but live, and declare the works of the Lord. For by His glorious resurrection, He has opened to you the gates of righteousness, and you will go through them, and praise the Name of the Lord.

See then, with the eyes of faith, the empty tomb, the empty burial cloths, and the heavenly messenger. Your Lord defeated death. He conquered sin. He conquered the devil. And He freely gives life to you. And see, as Mary did outside the tomb, your risen Lord. See Him with Bread and Wine as He makes Himself your Easter Feast this day. Eat and drink, and receive the forgiveness and life He has won for you. Receive Christ, your living Lord. Tremble and be amazed, for in the risen Christ you will not die.

The tomb is empty. Christ is risen! A blessed Easter.