



EASTER SUNDAY

March 31, 2024

St. James Catholic Church
*3909 Harrison * Kansas City, Missouri 64110*

Easter Message from Fr. Don Farnan

Saint Augustine famously proclaimed, *"We are Easter People and Alleluia is our song!"*

We celebrate this grace each spring against our Christian version of *March Madness* where we get caught up in spiritual victories and defeats that seem to reflect the atmospheric pressures of lion and lamb. While "the big dance" of college basketball dramatizes the hopes of Cinderella and small schools facing Goliaths, we partake in the drama of Jerusalem, the holy city, that Jesus entered 2,000 years ago to conquer sin and evil. The Christian chaos or madness involves chrism oils and anointing chosen ones much as Jesus, Himself, was anointed before fulfilling His destiny. It involves waving palm branches and singing *"hosanna in the highest."* It includes washing feet, Jesus' agony in the garden, the passion of Christ, encountering Sanhedrin, chief priest, procurator, and death squad. It re-presents Our Lord's scourge at the pillar, coronation with thorns, carrying of the cross, and our own walking stations that recall horrific encounters as well as the kind acts of good souls. As we reverence the cross and keep a fast, we claim solidarity with Jesus and His suffering while participating in the mysterious "eternal now" of both crucifixion and resurrection that co-exist in our reality. At the vigil service, we hear the stories of salvation history from the beginning of creation. Returning to primordial symbols of fire and water, we praise our redemption as nature's annual cycle brings us, once again, from winter into spring, cold into warmth, darkness into light, and death into life. As we move from ashes to Easter, it is a journey from desert to mountaintop in which we, too, can attest: *We are Easter People and Alleluia is our song!*

Of course, the spiritual wrestling match will continue within us—for good and evil are always fighting for control of our world and possession of our souls. It is a maddening chaos that remains, in part, because the Easter story is incomplete and unclear. The central focus of the celebration is an empty tomb. One Gospel mentions an earthquake that took place. One records a white-clad figure inside the tomb; another mentions two. One tells about a woman, Mary Magdalene, who went there first; another mentions several women going. Whether it was one woman or several, just women or women and later men, we are told that they searched for the Messiah. The accounts differ, like the chaos and confusion of searchers that morning, and of disciples into that day, and of a growing crowd into the weeks that followed. As Easter People, we are left with an empty tomb and maddening chaos that causes us to search. Our Easter Egg hunts today remind us of the search for the Risen Christ.

This apex event of our faith might encourage us to truly become Easter People, people who go forth from tragedy to bring triumph or who help others move from sorrow to saving grace. Easter People are all around us—you have seen them, talked with them. Through prayer and spiritual encounters, they come to know not just the Jesus of history but the Christ of faith. Through faith, they understand that there is more to our reality than life and death. They search for Christ in our midst and discover the hidden treasures of the presence of God all around us. They continue the message and mission that Jesus brought to earth by the

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