

**Rev. Kevin V. Madigan**  
**Church of St. Thomas More, NYC, April 20, 2019**  
**Church of Our Lady of Good Counsel, NYC, April 21, 2019**  
**Easter 2019**

In our secularized society for many Easter is simply a sort of Spring festival, just a celebration of the rebirth of nature after a long, gray winter. It gets lost in Easter egg hunts, in chocolate bunny rabbits, in new outfits for little children, in Easter bonnets and bows. I don't want to come off as "the Grinch who stole Easter," but I would rather focus instead on what is the spiritual significance of this, the most central feast of our Christian faith.

One way to approach this is to ask, do you know why a baptismal font always has eight sides? Did you ever notice that it has eight sides? It symbolizes the eighth day of creation, the New Day, the dawning of eternity. It represents that Easter Sunday, when Jesus was raised from the dead, when in the words of the Irish poet, William Butler Yeats, "all is changed, changed utterly, and a terrible beauty is born." What we celebrate is more than Jesus coming back to life—that is simply resuscitation, as amazing as that might be. We celebrate the beginning of a transformation of all humanity, of all creation, as well. In Baptism we are given the opportunity to share in that transformation. God's future is breaking through into our world. We catch a glimpse of the ultimate triumph of good over evil, of love over hate, of life over death. We are empowered to move in that direction, no longer weighed down by the past—by our narrowness of vision, by an accumulation of fears, by the constant reverting to a position of retrenchment and self-protection that our society encourages as the norm.

Usually we think of resurrection as something that happened long ago, or as something we hope to experience in a distant future. That being true, our focus should be on what is happening over and over again now, as we open ourselves to the power of the risen and living Christ. As we give of ourselves to another with a generous, self-sacrificing love, as He gave of Himself even to the point of death, we are experiencing right now what Easter is all about. St. Paul said, "I no longer live, but Christ lives in me." The Spanish mystic St. John of the Cross offered this analogy to express what St. Paul was speaking of. He said, consider a red-hot piece of coal. That ember is suffused with flame; the flame is not the piece of coal and the coal is not the flame. They retain their separate identities, but they are inextricably linked together. So, in Baptism, we are joined inextricably, we are incorporated into the living Christ. The love that is the very reality of God, made visible in Jesus Christ, begins to suffuse, to permeate our lives.

Amidst our own limitations, with all our brokenness, we are able to meet the life-giving, healing love of the risen Christ. We are empowered to move beyond our egoism, our enmities, our grudges, our spite, to walk the path that Jesus walked before us. We are being changed over time into new kinds of people. We are endowed with a sense of freedom and peace that no one can take from us, because we know that we are grounded in God. Easter faith provides us with the ability to see in people what often they cannot see in themselves—that despite their objectionable behavior they remain the children of God. At the same time it is to be realistic about the challenges and difficulties of living out the Gospel message Jesus has given us, but still we move ahead with faith, hope and love.

In the words of St. Augustine, “we are an Easter people and Alleluia is our song.” We are joyful because the veil has been lifted. We see now with the “eyes of faith,” because again “all is changed, changed utterly and a terrible beauty is born.”