

## HOMILY ON EASTER SUNDAY 2024

Given at Immaculate Conception Church, Los Angeles, California

12pm Mass, Sunday, March 31, 2024

by the Celebrant, Fr. Ted Ley, SM

Founder of The Schola Cantorum of the Pacific®

When I ask our school children which holiday is the most fun, of course they say, Christmas. When I ask what happens in the family on Easter Sunday, the answers vary. The Easter Bunny and Egg Hunts are OK, and Easter Baskets are wonderful; dinner with extended family, yes. But how indispensable is Easter? In variegated America, Easter ends up a vague cut above Hallowe'en, less noticeable than Thanksgiving, less fun than Valentine's Day, and less dynamic than Super Bowl Sunday.

Now to start, at this Mass there is something noticeably special. Music by the children of the Parish School, and many of the children in this Congregation singing along, as they too, students of the School, have practiced singing this Easter Family Mass. It is possible that more students have prepared for this particular Mass than any other Mass in this church for many years. So an importance is evident this moment. Some of this importance, personal. Our violinist and guitarists, their first public performance, presaging many future successes. As you hear the choral music unfold, you will see why our Archbishop José is so pleased with the Music at our School, as it imitates the Escolanía, the world's oldest choir school, in Monserrat, Spain. When performing in public our ICS kids are known as Escolanía Pacífica. This feature of our school, unique in Los Angeles, is a Music Education second-to-none, built upon the

beauty of the Sacred Liturgy, in our school's complete social, academic, artistic, athletic, and Faith-oriented environment.

Yet this musical milestone this afternoon is not what is most important about Easter Sunday for our families and the parish. It is a calling card, but not the event.

In this Paschal Season, we began with the Ashes of Lent, continued with penances as small as giving up candy and as large as forgiving a difficult human impasse. In this Lent, we have grown in Charity and overall concern for one another. The Palms last Sunday proclaimed Christ, King of Kings, who embraces the poor, the hard-working, the sincere, devoted and innocent People of God.

We reached the Holy Week Triduum – the Three Days. Holy Thursday, the declaration -- that in the Eucharist Jesus comes to the poor, washes our feet, proclaims the new commandment to Love One Another, and promises to be with us till the End of Time. Good Friday, the explanation -- Jesus suffers the most torturously painful form of execution ever dreamed up by evil men: Crucifixion. Then, Easter, the fulfillment: As prophesied over the ages, Jesus rises from Death, appears to his Mother, to the Eleven, and to the small remnant of men and women who will become the Church, the People of God, offering the world the Divine Universal Call to Holiness. All will find in Christ the fullness of Life itself and the promise of Life Everlasting, what Thomas Aquinas called the "Beatific Vision" of God.

That is why Easter actually is the greatest of all our human and family celebrations. We celebrate today the fullness of Life Itself, in

Christ. All human suffering now has meaning. All worry. All preoccupation. All sadness. All hard work. All creativity. All care for one another. Even the accidental, inexplicable, mysteries of life, all are taken up in what the Church calls, *Mystagogy* – the gradual coming to know – of the Ways of God.

Today we celebrate the purpose and finality of life and the promises of the fullness of Grace throughout our lives, giving each day meaning.

Easter is also greater because it is not just a day. Nor just this coming week, the Octave of Easter. Eastertide extends fifty days to Pentecost Sunday, the “Birthday of the Church.” At that point, all Nations, all people, all souls are called to Faith – the Universal Call to Holiness.

Our study of Religion is Faith Seeking Understanding. Christmas itself is already a formidable Act of Faith to believe that our Creator would choose to become one of us, in the Incarnation. So Christmas is itself is a great Act of Faith and that’s its main greatness.

But our Salvation in Christ and the promise of Everlasting Life in Christ, when added to our Faith in his Coming, is the completion of that greatness. The answer to the question, which is greater, Christmas or Easter, is that Easter completes, fulfils and yes, encompasses Christmas. Christmas and Easter are two parts of the same Christic action in the world.

And just as there are two parts to this Christic Action – Christmas and Easter, there are two forms of celebrational joy. These two forms complement each other and give us the complete celebration of what it means to be a Christian.

We can describe these two forms of joy by looking into our Sacred Liturgy. Two weeks before Christmas we celebrate the Joy of Christ's Coming into the World – the Latin word is, Gaudete, "Rejoice Ye." All nature jumps for joy at the Birth of Christ. The second, three weeks before Easter, is Laetare, "Be deeply happy." Our hearts are to experience the profound peace of knowing we are among the saved, called to everlasting life. Christ has saved us from sin, evil and death. So, if you have not heard of these two Sunday celebrations, keep Gaudete Sunday in mind prior to Christmas and Laetare Sunday prior to Easter; for they inform us of the nature, style and complementarity of our ways of celebrating the Christ-Life.

I know that at this moment I speak on behalf of all who care for and teach your children, in the Parish School of Religion and Parish School, Fathers Francisco and Abdias and their colleagues, who all wish you the happiest Easter Joy: Parents, children, grandparents and family, near and far, united in Faith and Love and in the Easter gift of happiness in this world, and the promise of Life Everlasting.

*Laus Deo.*