

I want to wish you and all those you Love a happy and wonderful Easter and a Blessed Easter!

When England was fighting Napoleon at the battle of Waterloo, the English government had signs placed in a variety of cities to let the citizens of Great Britain know how the war was going. One such sign was on the bell tower of Winchester Cathedral.

When the sign went up that summer day in 1815, it was partly obscured by a cloud and fog, but the people could see enough of the sign to be able to read: "England defeated." Everyone who saw it felt defeated too, until the cloud lifted and they could see the whole sign which read: "*England we defeated Napoleon.*" Within seconds, their sorrow was turned into joy and defeat was swallowed up in victory.

When Jesus died on the cross, those who believed in him felt lost and defeated. Jesus was dead and so were their hopes for a better world. But in just a couple of days their sorrow was turned into joy and defeat was swallowed up in victory.

A fourth grade teacher planned to perform an Easter {Play} for the parents of her students. Every boy and girl love it had a part to play. After all the parts were given out, the last child to receive a part was Johnny.

He got to be the stone in front of the tomb. No special costume was the time. required for this part. All he had to do was to roll himself up into a ball and pretend to be the stone. The teacher felt sorry for Johnny since all the other children got to wear some kind of costume. So before the final performance she asked John if he wanted another part so he could wear a costume. Johnny did not want to change. He said: "it's the most important part. If the stone doesn't roll away, then nobody can get into the tomb and see that it is empty. "A very smart little boy!

The stone had to be moved away not so Jesus could get out. He had already risen and was out of there. The stone had to be removed for us so that we could see the tomb was empty; so we could see that death had been robbed of its power; so we could see that a new world order had begun; so we could see the truth in Jesus' words: "I am the resurrection and the life."

At Easter we see lilies, Easter baskets, colored eggs, Easter bunnies, new outfits, etc., but the main symbol is the empty tomb. We've all seen artistic interpretations of the resurrection, but no one but the Roman guards were there when it happened and they reported it only to the high priests.

The only evidence we have of the resurrection is an empty tomb and many I eyewitness accounts of people who saw him after his resurrection, people who were willing to go to their death to witness that he was alive and they indeed did see him.

Those who saw him knew that what they were seeing was entirely different than anything they had ever seen before. Jesus was not just a dead man who had come back again to live the life he had before. He came back to a new kind of life, one that is beyond our ability to relate to so it is shrouded in mystery for us, and yet it is very real.

He could be seen and touched, he could eat food with his friends, he could move from one place to another effortlessly, walls and locked doors could not keep him in or out and those who saw him reported he even looked different. Yet when they saw him they knew it was no one else but the Lord.

His friends eventually came to know that when they saw him, his resurrection was more than God's endorsement on his good life. They knew his resurrection had something to do with them. The young man at the tomb told the women "he is going before you to Galilee." (Mk. 16, 1-7) His friends came to know that he was always ahead of us and was always going before us, calling us to follow him. He is our good shepherd, guiding us to new life. His resurrection was not just a personal favor to Jesus. It is a preview for each and every one of us who will allow ourselves to be guided by his word and sacraments.

When Jesus told his friend Martha when her brother died: "I am the resurrection and the life," he added: "whoever believes in me, even if he dies, will live, and whoever lives and believes in me will never die." Because of this St. Paul tells us today: "If then you were raised with Christ, seek what is above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Think of what is above, not of what is on earth." (Coloss. 3, 1-4)

Jesus overcame the power of evil and death in his resurrection. This does not mean evil and death no longer exist in the world. And because they do exist, many people in times of distress and will doubt in Jesus' resurrection.

It is true, the resurrection has not removed evil and death from the face of the earth, but it tells us evil and death will not have the last word. They are not the final outcome; they cannot ultimately defeat us if we share Christ's life. Today we celebrate Jesus' victory and our own. "This is the day the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad." Amen.