

Date: May 4, 2025 (Easter 3)

1. Texts: Acts 9:1-20; Ps. 30; Revelation 5:11-14; John 21:1-19.
2. Subject: the resurrection.
3. Topic: the reality and impact of the resurrection.
4. Aim: inspire.
5. Proposition: "The miracle of the resurrection has been made our miracle."

THE MIRACULOUS PEOPLE

The glow of Easter is already fading. Sure, Easter as a liturgical season will last until June 8, but most of our Easter symbols and celebrations have been taken down and put away until next year. We're getting back to regular life in the church and we are quickly returning to our usual and well-accustomed patterns of worship.

It is difficult to maintain the energy and excitement of Easter Sunday. It is quite natural that Easter should diminish somewhat.

In addition, the events of Easter are almost beyond imagination. That makes it difficult to maintain the atmosphere of Easter.

Then, there's the uncomfortable connection between resurrection and death. We're all a bit uneasy with thoughts of our own deaths. But we're only going to have access to resurrection if we die first. We like the idea of resurrection, but we're a little uncomfortable with its connection to death. No wonder Easter tends to fade.

It is the resurrection that verifies all the claims about Jesus of Nazareth. It is Easter that makes Christmas worth celebrating. Every eucharistic celebration is a re-enactment of the Last Supper transformed by the resurrection. With the reality of Easter beginning to retreat into the background, it is the obligation of the Church to uphold the truth of Easter and the resurrection.

First of all, let's be clear that Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ, the incarnate God who entered into time, space and human experience. God himself was born in human form. He grew up as he grew older. God himself proclaimed his

message for three years before the end. Jesus of Nazareth is God in our time, in our universe and in our experience.

God was then brutally tortured and executed. He died by state-sanctioned murder. Jesus of Nazareth was the victim of capital punishment, and it was legal.

God the Creator raised Jesus from death. Jesus was resurrected to a new and eternal form of life. Please, never, ever say, "Jesus came back to life." To come "back to life" is to come to the same quality of life that you had before, just as Lazarus had done. "Back to life" would mean that Jesus would have had the same quality of life as he had before. He would have aged. He would eventually have died a second time. Jesus did not come back to life.

Jesus came to a new quality of life. It was an unlimited life, a life that transcended time, space and human experience. It was life to be lived in the immediate presence of God the Creator. It was life that reunited him with God the Creator. The Creator brought the Christ to this new and eternal life.

It might be only a little important to mention that resurrection is not the same as reincarnation. In the theology of reincarnation, the individual returns to life inside time, space and possibly human experience, depending upon the amount of karma one has stored up in the previous life. Reincarnation is a return to life inside time and space. Resurrection is entry into the new and eternal life outside of time and space and in the immediate presence of God.

So, God the Creator set aside the laws of the universe to bring Jesus to this new life. This makes the resurrection a miracle. Easter is a miracle.

You and I can share in this miracle by faith through the grace of God. That is, God in his love, makes resurrection available to humanity. We take advantage of his offer through faith.

Faith is a relationship with God marked by love, trust, self-sacrifice and surrender to the will of God. We establish that faith by believing in Jesus as God incarnate, who lived and died and who was resurrected for us.

It is possible that there are other ways to enter into that saving relationship with God, so that others might take advantage of the resurrection of Jesus. But the faith relationship with God through Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit is the one secure and certain path to resurrection.

On Easter Sunday we celebrated the miracle of the resurrection. Jesus lived a human life and died a most excruciating human death. Christ died and the Creator resurrected him to an eternal life. God has made that resurrection available to us through faith. The miracle of Christ's resurrection has been made our miracle.

This likely won't change our experience of death. It will come as it will come. But this miracle must—it has to—change our perception of death. Death is not the great unknown for us. It is not a black curtain beyond which we cannot see. Death is our gateway to eternal life in the immediate presence of God. We don't know the precise details of that experience, but we do know its eternal reality. Our experience of resurrection will place us outside time and space. Eternal life in the nearer presence of God the Creator will become our human experience. We will live the transformed life for which we were originally created. In our resurrection we will be the miracles of God.

This is what Easter is all about, Charlie Brown. It is about God opening the door so that we might live his life in our way for eternity. It would help if we could keep that reality in front of us—at least until Pentecost.

AMEN.