

Easter Sunday, April 20, 2014

“Alleluia”

By: Roy G. Pollina+

What a wonderful day! What a glorious day! It is the day we have been waiting for and anticipating over many weeks. “This is the day the Lord has made.” Today is my birthday! I was born April 20, 1951. I had to wait until 2003 for my birthday to fall on Easter the first time. Today is the second time it has done that.

I hope that you were one of those who had fun watching the old movies that we played during Easter breakfast. We had two 8mm movies from the early fifties. Fr. Charles Fishburne, the Rector shown in the movie, left Christ Episcopal Church in 1956, so those movies can be no later than that. Many of you saw people you knew friends and family members in those old movies. Many of those dear, dear people seen so alive on an Easter morning 60 years ago are now dead. I dare say that those seen in that movie are still with us will not survive another 60 years. I checked the calendar to see when the next time Easter falls on my birthday. Easter falls on April 20th again in 2025 and I will be 74; it will fall again in 2087 and I will be dead. Those who were in the movie and are still alive today can challenge what I am about to say. But, I think it is a certainty that Fr. Fishburne declared to his congregation, exactly what I declared to you this morning. “Christ is Risen; the Lord is Risen

indeed”. After your birthday, Easter is the most important day in your life. You may remember that last week in my sermon, I began by quoting the second century theologian Irenaeus.

Concerning Jesus Christ, The Son of God Irenaeus wrote: “He became what we are so that we might become what he is.” In this sinful and broken world we know that everyone born will surely die, but we believe that, “God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten Son to the end that all that believe in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” We know that we must die. We know this because we have watched those around us join the ranks of the dead. But, we believe that one man, Jesus Christ, overcame death and the grave, and in doing so opened the way for us to eternal life. “He became what we are so that we might become what he is.”

Last week, the Sunday of the Passion, my sermon focused on the love God had for us that led Jesus to empty himself of his divine qualities and take upon himself our sin. Jesus knew our pain, Jesus knew our abandonment, Jesus knew our despair, Jesus knew our loneliness, and Jesus knew our humanity when our humanity was in the worse place possible. Like all of humanity, He died. Then, Jesus rose from the dead never to die again; eternally to

live in the Joy of his Father. Now, “we might become what he is!”

All of those people who sat in this church on Easter morning in the early 1950's, those who we watched in the movie, all of them, living or dead were inheritors of the promise that: “we should not perish but have Everlasting Life.” All of us here today, are inheritors of that same promise. Jesus of Nazareth, crucified under Pontius Pilate is alive today. As St. Paul so eloquently wrote, “But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.” We celebrate Easter for the same reason that we celebrate the day of our birth. On our birthday, we enter into life; on Easter we gain entrance to life eternal. Jesus' resurrection is the first fruits of the general resurrection that will see all who ever lived rise to new life in Christ. And, let me be quick to add, that Christ's resurrection conquered both death and sin. On the day of our birth we entered life in a sinful and broken world. Everyone ever born has a share in the pain and anxiety of life. Our own sin and the sins of others have marred the image of God that was ours at creation. Jesus resurrection erased our sin and reconciled the world to God. Our sins are forgiven. Unearned and undeserved; the judgment of death has been lifted and eternal life bestowed on us. On the

day of our birth we entered life in a sinful and broken world. On Easter morning, the gates of heaven were opened for us. Every evil we ever committed was left behind, forgotten, obliterated and we enter the kingdom of God pure and undefiled.

For those of you who have not done the math yet, I am 63 years old today. Many people my age stop celebrating birthdays, since each birthday reminds them that next year they will most likely be a little slower and a little weaker. I am very blessed to have a birthday on Easter, because I get to remind myself and remind you that we were created because God loves us. I get to remind myself and to remind you that because of what Jesus accomplished in his life, because of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, nothing can separate us from the love of God. It is great to be alive! Alleluia Christ is Risen, The Lord is Risen indeed Alleluia! Amen.