

## Easter 2024

### *“Jesus’s Resurrection giving Us the Grace to bear Spiritual Fruit in Holiness”*

1. As we come together as a Church throughout the world to celebrate Jesus’s Resurrection, we are reminded by all the symbols of the Easter Liturgy: *the Paschal candle, the newly blessed Easter water, the incense, and even the flowers* that Jesus is victorious over the powers of death – hence the Friday he died for us is now called Good Friday. One of the teachings of our Catholic Faith that is often misunderstood or leads to confusion is the statement in the Apostle’s Creed that *Jesus descended into hell* – which occurred between His death at 3 pm on Good Friday and whenever He rose from the dead in His human body the Sunday morning of the Resurrection. What does this mean? Does it mean He descended to the place of the damned that we call hell? No, but unfortunately there is not a word in English that captures the concept – Jesus did not go to the place of the damned - but rather to the “**place of the dead**”. In the Jewish faith it was called **Sheol** – *it was a place of waiting after death often seen as shrouded in darkness and stillness*. This is the place where all the good souls of people from the time of when our first parents sinned - and turned their backs on God listening to the evil one with the result that the gates of Heaven were closed to humanity - to when Jesus died on the Cross for our salvation. By Jesus spiritually visiting them on Holy Saturday they were released from Sheol to either go to Heaven or to Purgatory to get ready for Heaven. The book I am giving out after Masses this weekend is called: *My Conversations with Poor Souls* which I have referred to before in homilies, as what I think is the best book to read to show Purgatory is real, and that we need to spiritually help the souls there every day. It is the spiritual diary of a holy German woman Eugenie von der Leyen who was given by God the grace/cross to see the suffering souls regularly and to pray and suffer on their behalf. Her priest spiritual director asked her to write down her experiences with the suffering souls, to help others down the line to understand this reality, like us. This diary covers the time-period of the 1921-29 until Eugenie died. You may say, Father, that was 100 years ago - yes, and guess what: eternity is the same whether it is 1924 or 2024, and the means of helping the souls in Purgatory remains the same: *Masses, Holy Communions, Rosaries, acts of charity and penance, and now praying the Chaplet of Divine Mercy!* Please read it slowly, reflect, and pray, for yourself, your loved ones and the forgotten souls in

Purgatory. And remember I bring this up this weekend because we can only help the souls in Purgatory because of Jesus's salvific Death and Resurrection.

2. **Ponder the Resurrection tie-in to the famous parable of the Farmer and the Seed:** *A farmer went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seed fell on the path, and birds came and ate it up. Some fell on rocky ground, where it had little soil. It sprang up at once because the soil was not deep, and when the sun rose, it was scorched, and it withered for lack of roots. Some seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it. But some seed fell on rich soil, and produced fruit, a hundred or sixty or thirtyfold. Whoever has ears ought to hear (Matt 13:4-9).* **The same parable can apply to each of us here as to whether the truth of Jesus's Resurrection makes a difference in our every day life on earth.** Jesus goes on to explain the meaning of this parable: *The seed sown on the path is the one who hears the word of the kingdom without understanding it, and the evil one comes and steals away what was sown in his heart. The seed sown on rocky ground is the one who hears the word and receives it at once with joy. But he has no root and lasts only for a time. When some tribulation or persecution comes because of the word, he immediately falls away. The seed sown among thorns is the one who hears the word, but then worldly anxiety and the lure of riches choke the word and it bears no fruit. But the seed sown on rich soil is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields a hundred or sixty or thirtyfold (Matt 13:18-23).* From that we see only one of the 4 types of ppl bear spiritual fruit and grow in holiness. **Which category are we in right now, in relation to Jesus's Resurrection?** Do we not understand what it means, and so it fades away after today's Mass? Do we believe right now, but will earthly tribulations cause us to doubt and lose Faith? Or will anxiety and worldly pleasures/craving riches take it away? Or will we persevere and bear fruit 30, 60, 100-fold? 100-fold means we become a saint, 30 and 60 = bearing fruit but need perfected in Purgatory.
3. **God loves us so much; He wants to get us to 100-fold.** As we grow closer to God in increased faith and prayer, we increasingly discover how kind, merciful, and patient the Lord is with us humans. After all, if He didn't love us immensely, each one of us, why did Jesus undergo the most horrific suffering and death to give us the opportunity to have eternal life and to free us from our enslavement to sin?! Never forget that! God bless you.