

## Easter Vigil

My brothers and sisters, for most of the history of the Church, Catholic and Byzantine Catholics and Orthodox greeted each other from Easter until the Ascension with the Words: Jesus Christ is Risen!, upon which the other person would respond: Indeed, He is Risen, trampling down death by His own death! It has been my perpetual custom to do the same after the Masses of Easter.

It is indeed, the Death and Resurrection of the Lord that makes all of the difference! Do you think that the Apostles would have faced their own terrible, terrible deaths with such courage if they had not actually experienced the Glorified Lord, seen and touched Him, touched His glorified wounds, heard His beloved voice and greeting saying to them, after their benighted fear and flight from Him in His hour of need: Peace be with you!

Indeed, the Gospels tell us, that Peter and John, the first to enter the Tomb of Jesus, saw the empty shroud, they saw, and unlike the others who would not go in, they believed. He is Risen! The Resurrection of the Lord makes all of the darkness of sin, suffering and death, from the beginning until the end, different! Everything is now changed, nothing again can be the same: Our God, has indeed come in the Flesh of Jesus, He took upon Himself the sins of all men and women, hung them upon the cross and offers salvation from sin and death and union with Himself and the Father through His Holy Spirit poured out upon us in the Pentecost. Nothing can ever again be the same! Oh Death, where is thy sting, Oh wondrous fault of Adam that merited so great a Redeemer; whereby death has been trampled by death!

This alone is the hope of the human race! It alone is the light of the world, it alone can alleviate our fears and give us courage to live our faltering lives and strengthen our faltering feet to fully embrace this life and its struggles, with hope and even joy!

In examining the Shroud of Turin, which I have seen with my own eyes, I see more clearly the reality of the empty tomb of Jesus, which I have seen with my own eyes, which makes all of the difference to the hill of Golgatha, which I have

climbed and beheld: "Why are you seeking the Living One amongst the Dead? He is not here! He has Risen as He said! Behold the place where they laid Him!"

The Shroud is the par-excellent explanation of the Events of that continuous event: the Passion, Death and Resurrection! As one Scientist put it in tears, (who was at best a tenuous Christian before his examination of the evidence of the Shroud), The Shroud shows a man beaten to hell, and then shows a miracle that science cannot begin to explain: there is no pigment, there is not liquid penetrating the cloth except for His blood, and blood serum, there was an instantaneous flash of energy, which scanned the Risen Body of the Risen Lord in a 3 Dimensional coding, which would have been impossible for us to see and understand until most recently by scientific instruments. Then, the Body simply vanished from the winding cloths that bound it! But, my brothers and sisters, seeing is not believing; rather, believing is seeing!

Before Christmas, I asked you, who are being baptized, Confirmed and Communicated this night: "What do you ask of God's Church?" You said: "Baptism." And what does Baptism offer you? You replied: "Eternal Life!" This is the Mystery that Jesus, The Risen Lord offers you this night: A Union with Him that is so complete, that the Spirit of the Risen Lord will now live in you, and you will live with, and in Him, and through Him forever!

This is our hope, love is stronger than death, Goodness has conquered sin, and we who believe now receive the eternal pledge of our Redemption in every Eucharist. Now the Temple is no longer in Jerusalem; now The Risen Lord lives in every heart of every believer! Of course the Tomb is empty! Of course the shroud is empty! The Lord is not there, He is now alive and living in your hearts!