

HOMILY FOR THE EASTER SUNDAY

A dear old lady knew that she was about to die and hence asked her pastor to give her the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick. After being anointed she said: "Soon I'll be rocking in the *bosom of Moses*." "No dear," corrected the pastor, "the Bible says the *bosom of Abraham*." She replied: "Father, at my age, you don't care too much whose bosom it is!"

A funeral director called a man for further instructions about his mother-in-law's body. "Do you want her embalmed, cremated or buried?" "All the three!" the man answered promptly. "Don't take any chances."

After an atheist died, a friend looked at him in the casket, shook his head, and remarked: "All dressed up and no place to go."

A man was surprised to read the announcement of his own death in the obituary column of the local newspaper. Ringing up his close friend, he enquired, "Did you see the announcement of my death in the paper this morning?" "Yes," was the frightened answer in a shivering voice. "But where are you speaking from? Heaven or Hell?"

The pastor was visiting a terminally sick parishioner in the hospital. As he started consoling the patient the sick man said: "Don't worry about where I am heading to, Father. I have friends in both places."

Three friends were discussing death and one of them asked: "What would you like people to say about you at your wake service while your dead body in the coffin is visible to everyone?" The first of the friends said: "I would like them to say, he was a great humanitarian who cared about his community." The second said: "He was a great husband and father who was an example for many to follow." The third friend said, "I would like them to say, 'Look, he's moving in the coffin!'"

There is a story about a blind man. He sat on the sidewalk every day, asking for alms. His sign reads: "Help me. I am blind." People passing by vaguely noticed him. Then one day, a Good Samaritan took pity on him, and did something with his sign. It caught the people's attention, and

donations came flowing in. It was because the sign now reads: "It's a beautiful day! And I can't see it!"

The reason for all the above jokes is that according to an ancient Russian Orthodox tradition, the day before Easter was devoted to telling jokes. The reason was to reflect the joke God pulled on the devil in the Resurrection. Satan thought he won on Friday, but God had the last laugh on Easter Sunday.

Significance of Easter

Easter is the greatest and the most important feast in the Church. It marks the birthday of our eternal hope. "Easter" literally means "the feast of fresh flowers." We celebrate it with pride and jubilation for three reasons:

The Resurrection of Christ is the basis of our Christian Faith. The Resurrection is the greatest of the miracles -- it proves that Jesus is God. That is why St. Paul writes: *"If Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain; and your Faith is in vain... And if Christ has not been raised, then your Faith is a delusion and you are still lost in your sins... But in fact, Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep"* (I Cor 15:14, 17, 20). If Jesus Christ did not rise from the dead, then the Church is a fraud and faith is a sham. But if Jesus really did rise from the dead, his message is true! Without the Resurrection, Jesus would have remained forever a good person who had met a tragic end. People would remember some of his teachings, and a handful of people might try to live according to them. All the basic doctrines of Christianity are founded on the truth of the Resurrection. *"Jesus is Lord; He is risen!"* (Rom 10:9) was the central theme of the *kerygma* (or "preaching"), of the apostles. There is a story of two women who stood before Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris. One asked, "Why can't we build structures like this anymore?" Her friend answered, "The people who built this had Faith. Today we have only opinions. And you can't build a cathedral with opinions."

Easter is the guarantee of our own resurrection. Jesus assured Martha at the tomb of Lazarus: *"I am the Resurrection and the Life; whoever believes in Me will live even though he dies"* (Jn 11:25-26). Christ will raise us up on the last day, but it is also true, in a sense, that we have already risen with Christ. By virtue of the Holy Spirit, our Christian life is already a participation in the death

and Resurrection of Christ. 3) Easter is a feast which gives us hope and encouragement in this world of pain, sorrows and tears. It reminds us that life is worth living. It is our belief in the Real Presence of the Risen Jesus in our souls, in His Church, in the Blessed Sacrament and in Heaven that gives meaning to our personal, as well as to our common, prayers. Our trust in the all-pervading presence of the Risen Lord gives us strength to fight against temptations and freedom from unnecessary worries and fears. The prayer of St. Patrick, the Apostle of Ireland, reads: “Christ before me, Christ beside me, Christ within me, never to part.”