

## **Easter**

### **4.20.25**

When I attended elementary school, it was customary to give up candy during the season of Lent. Each year, for forty long days, my sisters, brothers, and I refrained from eating candy. It was perhaps the most difficult thing a kid could ever do.

Up to Ash Wednesday, I think its fair to say that I probably ate some candy every day. And I have the cavities and fillings to prove it. But on that dreadful Ash Wednesday, each of us firmly committed to this challenging sacrifice.

So, it goes without saying that Easter Sunday morning was a glorious day. Perhaps ranking only behind Christmas morning, Easter Sunday morning was the time when we would look for our Easter baskets. Those Easter baskets would be hidden all throughout our house. Some would be behind the sofa. Another was found in the linen closet. I think one year there was an Easter basket in the dryer and another in the oven – not the safest places for them to be hidden.

Each of the baskets was made of wicker – that is, woven pieces of wood. At the bottom of the basket was Easter grass – plastic or paper strips of different colors. In the center of the Easter grass was a giant, chocolate covered egg with our names written out in cursive. I knew that I discovered my basket when I saw the word “Johnny” written in beautiful lettering. Around that giant chocolate covered Easter egg were jelly beans as well as smaller chocolate candies like Hershey’s Kisses, Sno Caps, and Junior Mints. If we were really lucky, we might discover a Pez dispenser. And we always had Peeps – bright yellow and pink. To be honest, the pink ones always tasted funny to me. I may have exchanged some of those for pieces of chocolate candy without my sisters or brothers knowing about it. I’m guessing some of those same Peeps from 60 years ago have simply been rewrapped and sold again. After all, Peeps have a half-life similar to Twinkies.

Once we found our Easter baskets, the house became eerily quiet. I can picture my Mom going from room to room to see what was going on. I’m sure each child she came upon was doing the same thing. Deprived of candy for over 40 days, we were gorging ourselves on our newfound bounty. I still have images of myself like this – cheeks filled with candy, looking like a squirrel who discovered acorns after a long winter. And chocolate dripping down my chin and onto my favorite pajamas.

I’m sure my mom just turned away, shook her head, and went for her first cup of coffee and cigarette to help calm her as she would face the sugar high which would begin to hit us and last for the rest of the day.

I never really thought much about those Easter baskets. At the time, they were simply a container for holding all that candy which I had been deprived of eating all throughout Lent. But on this Easter Sunday morning, the thought of that basket and its contents

comes flooding back to me. And as an adult, I have a deeper appreciation now of what I received on each of those glorious mornings.

As I mentioned, most Easter baskets are made of wood. That should remind us of the wood of the cross that Christ died on. The wood of the cross holds all of humanity together. The wood of the cross and the sacrifice of Christ on that cross is what brings new life to us and carries us through each day. The wood should also remind us of the manger that the newborn Christ was laid in. In the days of Jesus, a manger was used to feed the animals who stayed there. Jesus in the manger reminds us that he came to feed us and sustain us throughout our lives.

The basket also reminds us of the basket that saved the baby Moses as he floated down the Nile River, escaping the evil intentions of Pharaoh. The basket is also reminiscent of the wooden ark which saved Noah, his family, and all those animals when rained for those forty days and nights, flooding the earth.

The Easter grass in the bottom of the basket reminds us of new life. The grass usually takes the shape of a nest. Of course, the nest is the place where new life is born and nourished as well. At Easter, Christ brings new life to our us and continues to nourish and nurture that life every time we partake in the sacraments.

Speaking of new life, eggs – be they real or made out of chocolate – remind us of new beginnings and a new hope. Just like Christ broke through the tomb as he rose from the dead, life bursts forth from each egg reminding us once again of new life and a fresh start.

And finally, all that candy / all those sweets remind us that the bitterness of our Lenten sacrifice has ended. In its place, Christ makes life sweet and whole again. And he does so with abundance.

Today, of course, we celebrate the gift of new life that Christ won for us as he was raised up from the darkness of the tomb. Every Sunday, we recall that great event and affirm our belief in it when we recite these lines from the Creed.

***I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins. And I look forward to the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.***

In his First Letter to the Corinthians, St. Paul talks about this reality. He confronts those who doubt this expression of faith when he writes,

***...if Christ is preached as raised from the dead, how can some among you say there is no resurrection of the dead? If there is no resurrection of the dead, then neither has Christ been raised. But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep... Since death came through a human being, the resurrection of the dead came also through a human being. For as in Adam all die, so too in Christ shall all be brought to life... Thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Cor. 15:12-13, 20-22, 57)***

When this homily concludes, I will go to the baptismal font. At that sacred spot, I'll lead us in renewing our baptismal promises. At the end of those promises, we will affirm our belief in Christ's resurrection as well as the hope that we will participate in that resurrection on our last day.

Again, St. Paul talks about that in his Letter to the Romans, where he says,

***...are you unaware that we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were indeed buried with him through baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead...we too might live in newness of life. For if we have grown in union with him through a death like his, we shall also be united with him in the resurrection.  
(Romans 6:3-5)***

So when you look at your Easter basket and feast on its contents, may the joy, sweetness, and satisfaction you experience be just a small foretaste of the new life and its sweetness that Christ brings to us at Easter and always. Friends, feast away, treat yourself to some chocolates and sweets – for these goodies remind us of the goodness that God has won for us and bestows upon us through the resurrection of his Son, Jesus Christ! Jesus Christ is risen! He is risen, indeed!

Amen? Amen!