

HOMILY ~ EASTER

APRIL 8-9, 2023

When my niece, Delaney, was about four years old, she could hardly wait for Easter to come. She was going to go to an Easter egg hunt, she was excited about the Easter bunny coming, she had a new dress to wear to Church and new shoes to go with it. I wondered if she knew the real meaning of Easter so he asked her: *“Delaney, do you know what Easter means?”* She smiled and said: *“Yes I do.”* So I asked her: *“What does it mean?”* She raised her hand and said: **“Surprise!”** Not the answer that I expected, but it is a really good way to describe that first Easter 2,000 years ago.

We heard an account of what happened in the Gospel Reading today. Mary Magdalene went to the tomb early in the morning while it was still dark. She found the stone rolled away, and Jesus was not in the tomb. **Surprise!** Mary was at the foot of the cross when Jesus died. She witnessed that. She was not sure what happened, so she made a logical assumption. She told the disciples someone had taken Jesus from the tomb, and we do not know where they put him. Peter and John went to the tomb. Jesus’ body was not there, and they found the burial bands and the cloth that covered his face in another place all neatly rolled up. **Surprise!** If someone were going to steal Jesus body from a tomb that was guarded, do you think they would have taken the time to remove all of the burial bands first and neatly roll them up before they left with him? That made no sense. The Gospel Reading ends with a statement that *John saw and believed*. What did he believe? I think he just believed that this is not over yet. No one observed the Resurrection. The fact that Jesus had risen needed to be confirmed by the post Resurrection appearances. I think he believed that Jesus was acting in the way he acted for the past three years. **Surprise!**

Jesus changed water into wine at the wedding feast of Cana. **Surprise!** Jesus fed 5,000 people with five loaves of bread and two fish. **Surprise!** Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead after he was in the tomb for four days. **Surprise!** *You have heard it said, love your neighbor and hate your enemy. But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.* **Surprise!** Do I need to forgive my brother or sister as many as seven times? Not seven times but 77 times. **Surprise!**

Life continues to be a surprise. Think of Easter 2020. We were in the midst of a Pandemic, and Masses were cancelled. **Surprise!** Since then some of the people we love went home to the Lord, and we have been through a very difficult few years. But we have learned to live with COVID, and we are back at Church. **Surprise!** I have learned a lot over the past few years. I learned how much I need to be present with people physically, how much I love to be able to travel, how much I value being part of our St. Edith Family, how I need to live more in the present and live each day to the fullest because it could be my last.

We make our plans and then life happens. **Surprise!** Life is not random. There is a master plan, we just do not always know what it is in advance; but we can find the meaning and the goodness in events as we move forward. Jesus is risen, and he is with us always. He sustains our lives and our planet every day. Jesus knows the plan. Life is not always easy, but it is very good and it is very much worth living. When things happen in our lives that we do not expect, maybe the best reaction is **Surprise!** I guess this is what was supposed to happen. How am I going to work through this? How am I going to find the meaning and the goodness? I know I do not need to do it alone; Jesus will be walking with me. While life in this world is hard, we were not meant for this world. We were meant to be with God and all of the people we love in heaven for all eternity where there will be no more pain, only the love will be left. Jesus is risen. He has destroyed death forever. **Surprise!** Jesus continues to act as he always has. Are you ready for the **Surprise?**

Love and Peace,

Fr. Jim