

HAPPY EASTER 2021!

I extend a warm greeting to each and every one of you on this Easter Sunday which we are celebrating in the waning shadow of the Covid 19 pandemic. Last Easter we had no choice but to stay home from church and completely forgo the celebration of the liturgy. This year, with safety lessons learned from the past twelve months in place, a good number of us are eager for in-person celebrations. So, welcome to all of you who have come to St. Catharine of Siena Church to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus on Easter Sunday.

No matter what the circumstances may be, Easter always invites us to rejoice in the victory of goodness over evil, love over hate and life over death. Easter proclaims Jesus' overturning of everything that keeps us from enjoying the fullness of life as his disciples in the world today. And yet this Easter still calls us to put aside our extreme preferences and show solidarity with everyone—our beloved family members, our closest friends, mere acquaintances and total strangers—by continuing a spirit of attentiveness and patience.

On Easter Sunday we look forward to lovely flower arrangements in our beautiful church, and to the celebration of Mass with upbeat, joyful music. We come with our children dressed in their finest ready to sing the praises of Jesus, the Risen One, present and working in our world today.

Having said that I encourage those who are not comfortable joining us in church this year to make an effort to celebrate the joy of the resurrection in a simple way at home. Gather the family around the dining room table and read one of the Easter gospels you would hear in church this liturgical year (Mark 16:1-7 or John 20:1-9). Be courageous and offer a few simple petitions for the hurting, the needy, the lost, care givers, special needs, the world, the deceased and so on, and then conclude with a final Our Father. A simple moment of Easter Prayer such as the one I have described is a positive way to proclaim our trust in God's love and mercy given to us in Jesus. God's love is restorative, and it will get us through all the discomfort, disappointment and, in some cases, terrible losses we have known since last Easter.

With the new freedom we feel this year and with the wise caution we must continue, I wish you all a most blessed Easter Season. I assure you of my prayers for you every day, especially at the celebration of the Eucharist. I always begin by imagining you present here with me. I take a few moments to picture your faces. I remember shared experiences and focus on your strengths and goodness. That brief exercise helps me include everyone in the celebrations here in our beautiful church under the patronage of St. Catharine of Siena. The Easter Season is long—fifty days. I hope that if you are not comfortable celebrating the liturgy on Easter Day itself, that you will be able to be present on a Sunday or weekday of this great season that leads to Pentecost Sunday, the climax of the Easter feast (May 23, 2021). Let us all pray for continuing success in the struggle against the pandemic. God is supporting all the efforts of the scientific community as well as the efforts of ordinary folks like you and me. We are still experiencing unprecedented challenges. We need to continue our positive efforts—mask wearing, hand washing, physical distancing etc.—and trust that God alone will deliver us from the unknown and lead us into a brighter future filled with renewed freedom, certain goodness, hopeful love and life sustaining grace.

Fr. Tony Dattilo