



SAINT LOUIS ABBEY



**Easter Vigil 2011**

**Saint Louis Abbey**

**April 24, 2011**

**8:15 p.m. Vigil**

**Homily – Abbot Thomas Frerking, O.S.B.**

Dear friends, we come now in the celebration of the Triduum to the first great proclamation of the resurrection of the Lord, made by the angels to the women at the tomb, and followed shortly thereafter by the very appearance to the holy women of the Risen Lord himself.

Our faith in the Lord's resurrection is founded ultimately on the word of the Lord himself: he manifested to his apostles that he spoke the word of God; he revealed to them that he was both God and man; he revealed to them his resurrection according to his human nature through his prophecies of it, through the empty tomb, through his many appearances to them in the course of forty days, and through the words he spoke to them in explanation of what they were seeing, hearing, touching. The apostles testified to the resurrection of Jesus to the people, and their testimony was confirmed by the many prophecies and miracles which accompanied it. The Church has passed their testimony down the many ages and generations to us, and the testimony of the Church to the resurrection of the Lord is confirmed by the great moral miracles which continuously accompany her testimony, the miracles of her oneness, holiness, catholicity and apostolicity, by the prophecies and physical miracles which have always accompanied her testimony, and by the numerous private signs shown to each human being who sincerely seeks the truth. All this is sufficient for the natural reason alone to come to the judgment that the testimony to the resurrection of the Lord is indeed a revelation from God and is therefore to be believed as certainly true. Nevertheless, we cannot by our own natural powers actually believe that revelation, actually make the act of faith; what is revealed is too utterly beyond the world we naturally know, too utterly beyond what is ever naturally asked or demanded of us. Only by the grace of God can we make the act of faith, and so faith is a free gift of God, by which we believe what is revealed on account of the word of God himself. Thus our belief in the resurrection of the Lord enjoys not only the certainty of the approbation of the natural reason, but the measurelessly greater certainty of supernatural faith based on the word of God: "All flesh is grass, and the beauty thereof like the flower of the field; the grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of the Lord endures forever." Let us, then, receive this gift of faith with endless thanksgiving for the unspeakable gift that it is, and with utter humility before the Lord, and also before our fellow human beings, for there is nothing we could ever have done to merit the gift of faith, and why we have been chosen to receive it and, as it appears, not others remains, at least in this life, an inscrutable mystery.

The resurrection of the Lord in which we believe is the bodily resurrection of the Lord: it is not the survival of the Lord merely as some sort of ghostly spirit, no, it is the rising of his true body from death, the reunion of his body with his soul, and the



## SAINT LOUIS ABBEY



transformation of both his soul and his body into the eternally indefectible state of glory. The body of the risen Lord was the same body he had had in his earthly life, the same body which hung and died upon the Cross; in its risen state it still bore the marks of the wounds suffered on the Cross. But it had been transformed into a spiritual body, still a true body, but now the perfect vehicle of the soul. And the power of Beatific Vision, which the Lord's soul had always enjoyed, the Lord now released fully into both his soul and his body, glorifying both with a splendor neither imaginable nor conceivable by us in this life.

The resurrection of the Lord, together with his passion and death, is his greatest glorification of his Father; it is the greatest vindication of him and his mission; it is the beginning of his exaltation to the highest heaven where he sits at the right hand of his Father, and from where he pours out the Father's and his Spirit into all the world. For us, the Lord's resurrection is the confirmation of the whole of our faith, the assurance that we ourselves shall rise from the dead, the source indeed of our resurrection, not only on the last day, but beginning already in this life. For the Lord gives us the unspeakably great promise that by conforming us through the sacraments he has instituted to his own resurrection he will work in us our own resurrection after the pattern of his resurrection, and that he will begin to do this already in this life. In this life, by Baptism he will effect in us the resurrection of our souls from the death of sin to the new life of justification and grace; by Confirmation he will pour into our souls the fullness of his Spirit and make us witnesses to him and to life in his Spirit; by the Eucharist he will give us his very Body and Blood, his Risen Body and the Precious Blood which is in that Risen Body, he will give us his very Body and Blood as our nourishment in this new life in the Spirit, and as our communion, though in a veiled way, with him, and through him with his Father and his Spirit, and in him with all our brothers and sisters. And then, after our death in this world, at the time determined by him, by the final effect of our Baptism he will raise our body, reunite it with our soul, and glorify both forever; by the final effect of our Confirmation he will make us to share in his being as lifegiving spirit, becoming pourers forth and breathers forth of the Spirit; by the final effect of the Eucharist he will raise us up on the last day, and, the veils and appearances of the Eucharist disappearing forever, he, seen by us face to face, will give us himself in communion, he in us and we in him, and in that communion we shall also see his Father and his Spirit as they are, and our brothers and sisters as they truly are, each at last that unique image of the Lord they were ever called to be, and all this an unending glory and joy here unknown and unspeakable. So it is that in the Easter Vigil, in which there is first heard the proclamation of the Lord's resurrection, wherever there are catechumens the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and the Eucharist are celebrated, the Lord giving the elect through those sacraments the new life through water and the Spirit and that communion, as members of his Body the Church, with him, with his Father and Spirit, and with their brothers and sisters in him. So too it is that in the Easter Vigil, wherever it is celebrated, we who have already been made members of the Church renew our Baptismal vows and our Profession of Faith, the effects of our Baptism and Confirmation being thus renewed in us, and through the celebration of our first Easter Eucharist receive a renewal of that blessed



## SAINT LOUIS ABBEY



communion in which alone our fulfillment consists. Moreover, the renewal which is offered us will, if we receive it, bring us closer to the Lord than we have ever been before. Let us, then, receive it, for it is the step which the Lord proposes us to take this Easter on our journey, by his grace, to him.

No wonder then, dear friends, that the Easter Vigil is the greatest of the Church's liturgies, no wonder that Easter is her greatest feast, no wonder that Easter introduces her greatest season, the Easter Season of the fifty days of resurrection joy, during which Christians down the ages have greeted one another with the Easter proclamation itself, whose form in Greek and Latin and English it is my joy to remind you of each year:

Christos anesti; alithinos anesti!

Christus surrexit; vere surrexit!

Christ is risen; he is truly risen!