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Easter Vigil Homily

'Live in my love! Live forever, Jesus says.'

**Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception
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Dear friends,

The work of Redemption is accomplished: Jesus Christ has passed from death to life. Jesus Christ is risen. He is truly risen even as He promised. Alleluia.

Tonight the Church throughout the world contemplates and rejoices in a new reality: death is not the end. Through Jesus Christ a new mode of existence has been inaugurated.

The Gospel tells us that our Lord brought back to life the son of the widow of Naim, the daughter of Jairus, and his friend Lazarus. In some way these acts have helped us to prepare us for the mystery of His own resurrection. These events have helped us to begin to see who Jesus is: true God; Lord over life. But what is accomplished on Easter is different. It is similar from the view of human experience; but more – infinitely more. Lazarus was raised; the young man and the little girl were brought back to life. They resumed their life on earth. They aged and died once more.

The proclamation of faith within the Church concerning Jesus is different. Jesus IS risen. Jesus lives! The only response we can make is Alleluia! Praise ye the Lord!

In the totality of the mystery of Jesus Christ we can begin to see the implications – the promise – of this holy night. God the Father sent His Son in human flesh; Son of God, Son of Mary.

"The Word became flesh and dwelt among us." (Jn 1:14) He did not merely visit us. He united Himself to us; He united us to Himself. The Council teaches, "By the Incarnation the Son of God has united Himself in some fashion with every man." (GS 22). Jesus Christ picked us up;

picked up all humanity. He carried us through the Cross to resurrection and new life. The dead are raised, not to die again, but to live, forever.

Neither is this action of Jesus Christ joining Himself to us a singular event of past history, accomplished on Christmas morning 2000 years ago. Rather the living Jesus is joining Himself to us in the life and work of the Church. What do you think is on the minds and pressing the hearts of our catechumens and candidates at this moment? They know what is going to take place in the next moments. So soon they will be joined to the Risen Christ through the life of the sacraments: Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Eucharist. It is not by coincidence that these sacraments are celebrated at Easter Vigil. This is the moment of life. Here is the moment of the encounter with the living Jesus.

We blessed and consecrated the oils at Chrism Mass. We commemorated the institution of Holy Mass on Thursday, the sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ. In a few moments we will all renew the promises of Baptism. Readily we will profess the Creed and renounce Satan and sin. May we do so with all our heart. But we know the real power flows from the promise which comes to full flower in the Risen Jesus. And His promise? Live! Live my brothers and sisters! Live in my love! Live forever, Jesus says.

The sacraments draw us because they are the irrevocable gift of Christ to His Church. They draw us to Him – and through Him to the Father. Fellowship is wonderful. I need it. Please let us all do everything we can to be Jesus Christ for others. We want to live a generous love. The Gospel demands it. But let us never forget Christ's gifts to the Church preserved in the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church: Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Eucharist; Holy Eucharist, the Body and Blood of Christ shed and given for the life of the world. This is the daily Bread which makes new the Sacrifice of Jesus Christ each and every time it is offered on the altar. The Church draws her life from the Eucharist (*Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, John Paul II). Jesus Christ has willed it so and He invites you and me to join ourselves, all our joys, and every sorrow to that one perfect sacrifice acceptable to the Father. This is infinitely more than a social meal. Rather, here we live with His life and our charity becomes an extension of the encounter with Christ. "He who believes in me, will do the works I do, and greater works than these." (Jn 14:12)

Through sacramental Confession I need my sins forgiven by Christ the Priest. I desire to be

reconciled in the Church. I have so often failed and offended. I need to often hear, “God, the Father of mercies ... and I absolve you from your sins.” Jesus has willed it so!

When I am sick and when death approaches, I want to meet Jesus Christ in the Sacrament of Anointing. I want to be united to you, with my sins forgiven, through the sacrament instituted and intended by Christ.

In the Sacrament of Holy Orders, I will ordain deacons and priests, marking the priests indelibly with Holy Chrism as other Christs. Throughout the next year I will confirm thousands of men and women, sealing them in the sevenfold Gift of the Holy Spirit, sending them out as apostles in the world and witnesses for Christ.

In the seven sacraments of salvation preserved in the Church, Jesus the Risen One, is joining Himself to us even now. He bids us follow Him on the path of the Cross, and He promises nothing less than the gift of eternal life.

He is risen. Christ is truly risen. Alleluia!

Mary, joyful queen and mother: look how your Son lives nevermore to die. Behold your sons and daughters Jesus entrusts to your care. Keep us faithful to Him.

To all those entering the Church tonight throughout the diocese, I extend the warmth and love of the Church. Dear friends all, I wish you the peace of the Risen Christ. Blessed Easter! Holy Easter! Joyful Easter!