

**CATHOLIC PARISH
OF THE DIOCESE OF BRENTWOOD**

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HOLY SATURDAY – EASTER VIGIL

Parish Mass Book – Readings – pgs. **223 - 257**

Hymn Book numbers for Mass

676 – Take my hands and make them as your own

596 – Peace is the gift of heaven to earth

570 – Oh, the love of my Lord is the essence

488 – Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord

Dear brothers and sisters,

On the first Easter, very early in the morning, the women come to the tomb with spices to anoint Jesus' body. They find the stone rolled away so they enter the tomb, but they do not find Jesus' body. Two angels appear and the women bow down in fear, looking at the ground. Then the angels ask, "*Why do you look for the living among the dead?*"

That's a good question. Of course, it was a good question in the context of the story of the women going to the tomb on that first Easter. It's still a good question for us this Easter, living some 2,000 years later.

Why do you look for the living among the dead?

For the women, this must have been a surprising question. Think about it. They had gone to the tomb to attend to Jesus' body. They had served their Lord during his earthly life. Now they would do one last act of service for Jesus. They had witnessed his death. They knew that there was no time for a proper burial. So, they came with spices to complete the burial rites. Their beloved Lord was dead. They could at least perform this one last act of love for him. But their hearts must have been heavy.

They must have thought their life with their Lord was over. His call to follow had been irresistible. Serving him was like no other service they had known. It was perfect freedom. But now he lay lifeless in a tomb. They had known perfect love in Jesus, and the world had killed him.

But something amazing happens when they reach the tomb. When they arrive at the tomb, they enter into the place of their deepest and darkest fears. They enter the very place of death. And, yet, what do they find when they enter this place of fear and death? Nothing. No body. No thing. Nothing.

We are told that they were perplexed when they did not find the body, which is understandable. They thought their life with Jesus was over and his dead body was the final coda. But the angels tell them that this is not the end of the story. They say, "*Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you... that the Son of Man must be crucified, and on the third day rise again.*"

Wow! Astounding, overwhelming, world-turning news! A total change of orientation. Why are you looking for the living among the dead? That was then, this is now, and now there is new life, resurrection life ahead. They hear the good news that Christ is risen from the dead, and they need to change from people who perform burial rites for the dead to apostles who bear witness to the living Lord. They need to stop living in the past and start living in the future. They need to change from people who are bent over with fear, staring at the ground, to people who stand up, go forth, and boldly proclaim that God's life is stronger than any death, that God's love is stronger than any hate, that God's peace is more powerful than human violence, that Jesus Christ has been raised from the dead and is alive. *Why are you looking for the living among the dead?*

The good news of Easter is that Jesus Christ, who was crucified, has been raised from the dead. This belief, this truth, his resurrection changes everything. Cruelty is not the last word. Sin and evil are not the ultimate powers of the universe. Death does not get the final laugh. Forgiveness and love and life are the final realities of the world. The power of God is stronger than any tomb. Jesus Christ is risen today.

And the good news of Easter is not only that Jesus Christ has been raised from the dead and lives, but also that the power of the resurrection can transform our lives as well. New life is possible, here, now, today. We can stop looking for the living among the dead. We can live new lives, here and now, by the power of the resurrection. The promise of Easter is that we can.

Jesus Christ is risen from the dead. He is alive. He has gone ahead of us to prepare a place for us. He promises to meet us there.

Why do we keep looking for the living among the dead?

Alleluia! Christ is risen. The Lord is risen indeed. Alleluia!