

HOMILY

Easter Sunday *The Resurrection of the Lord*

March 23, 2008

Rev. Andrew A. Czajkowski
St. John the Evangelist Parish
Davison, Michigan

In getting ready for Easter in Sunday School, the teacher asked each student, “What does Easter mean to you?” One child replied, “Easter means egg salad sandwiches for the next two weeks!” Maybe that is not the best answer, but it is a good question.

What does Easter mean to you? Does it mean something more than an opportunity for a new spring outfit, a family dinner, or an excuse to bite the heads off all those purple and pink marshmallow Peeps? It may be a little more difficult to tell the story in our modern world.

A father was explaining to his five-year-old son how Jesus died and then on the third day was resurrected from the dead. “That’s what we believe,” the father said. “That’s how we believe Jesus is the Son of God, because he came back from the dead just as he said he would.” The boy replied, “Do you mean like Elvis?”

Well, no, not exactly like Elvis. This is a new world. People believe just about everything except that which is most true. We have to work a lot harder in this new world to help people understand the awesome story of the Gospel.

In John’s telling of the Easter story, before dawn on the third day, it is Mary Magdalene who rises to anoint Jesus’ body. She makes her way to the grave. It is empty. The Lord is gone. She is confused and terrified. She races back to tell Peter and John. Peter and the other Disciple start for the tomb. Both are running. They confirm what Mary Magdalene has reported to them.

The Disciples leave the scene and go home; but Mary, paralyzed, stays in the garden, in tears. Then comes a voice and a question, “*Woman, why are you crying?*” “They have taken my Lord away,” she says, “and I don’t know where they have put him.” And then she turns around and sees Jesus standing there but does not recognize him. “Woman,” he says, “why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?” Thinking he was the gardener, she says, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him and I will get him.” Then Jesus says to her, “Mary.” She turns toward him and cries out in Aramaic, “Rabboni!” which means teacher.

Jesus says, “Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet returned to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them I am returning to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.”

Mary Magdalene goes to the Disciples with the news, “I have seen the Lord!” A simple testimony, but one that would change the world. In the course of a matter of fifty days, five hundred more would see the Lord with their very own eyes. What is it that God is saying to us through this beautiful Easter story? ***Jesus is very much alive.***

Easter is not an ending. Easter is the beginning of a whole new world.

- ◆ A world in which resurrection is a reality.
- ◆ A world in which death has been destroyed.
- ◆ A world in which Jesus lives forever.

Do you believe this?

A few years ago Christian youth began wearing a bracelet or pin or shirt that read, “W.W.J.D.” Of course, we all know what these initials stand for—*What Would Jesus Do?* The only real problem with the W.W.J.D. analogy is that it is presented in the wrong voice. It’s the question you would ask of a dead person. Asking what would Jesus do? intimates that Jesus is no longer a real player—that Jesus’ own activity was in the past and so should be voiced in the past tense. By putting Jesus in the past tense, W.W.J.D. forgets about Easter. Easter puts Jesus in our midst, in our past, present, and future forever!

For Christians who understand the life-breathing power of Easter, the question need never be a hypothetical “What would Jesus do?” Instead, the question is a searching into “**W.I.J.D.**”—***What Is Jesus Doing?*** What would Jesus do? is the question of a mourner trying to preserve the memory of a loved one who is dead and gone.

Easter is not about preserving the memory of a dead person. It is not about formally mourning and remembering the life and works of Jesus. If that were all Easter had to offer, there are a lot better ways we could spend this Sunday.

Easter proclaims Christ if risen, not two millennia ago, but this very day. We live in the power of Jesus’ resurrection this very hour. Christ is alive for each of us here today. We don’t have to ask W.W.J.D.? But we do need to recognize **WHAT IS JESUS DOING?** among us on this Easter Sunday.

- ⊕ *W.I.J.D. in your life?*
- ⊕ *W.I.J.D. in your home?*
- ⊕ *W.I.J.D. in this church?*
- ⊕ *W.I.J.D. in our community?*
- ⊕ *W.I.J.D. in your school or your college?*
- ⊕ *W.I.J.D. in your family?*
- ⊕ *W.I.J.D. on the internet?*
- ⊕ *W.I.J.D. in Iraq?*
- ⊕ *W.I.J.D. Palestine?*
- ⊕ *W.I.J.D. in Jerusalem?*
- ⊕ *W.I.J.D. in Washington, D.C.?*
- ⊕ *W.I.J.D. in your wallet?*
- ⊕ *W.I.J.D. in your heart?*
- ⊕ *W.I.J.D. in your soul?*