

## **In Nomine Iesu**

### **The Resurrection of our Lord 2024**

**Today is heaven day for all the earth - Mark 16:1-8**

“Now when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, that they might come and anoint Him. Very early in the morning, on the first day of the week, they came to the tomb when the sun had risen. And they said among themselves, ‘Who will roll away the stone from the door of the tomb for us?’ But when they looked up, they saw that the stone had been rolled away--for it was very large. And entering the tomb, they saw a young man clothed in a long white robe sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. But he said to them, ‘Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He is risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid Him. But go, tell His disciples--and Peter--that He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him, as He said to you.’ So they went out quickly and fled from the tomb, for they trembled and were amazed. And they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.”

Grace be to you and peace from God the Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, the firstborn from the dead. Dear fellow redeemed in Christ:

Good Friday is the day Christ our Lord laid down His life to reconcile our fallen creation to its Creator. Good Friday has been revered by Christians for nearly 2000 years for that reason. This week, Good Friday, the president of the United States for the first time ever drew the nation’s

attention to a little-known day, March 31, today, as International Transgender Visibility Day. It had already been called that by some since 2010. That the president chose Good Friday to announce this about today, Easter Sunday, should tell you all you need to know about the wisdom and understanding of government when it comes to the things of God. Government only tries to fix what it, in its very limited wisdom, thinks needs fixing, ignoring, neglecting or disparaging all else.

This has always been true of government. Government knows nothing of things eternal. Its only concern is the here and now. To give another example, when I was in high school, I remember the observance of the first Earth Day, April 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1970. It was organized by a U.S. senator. Most authoritative sources will tell you that the modern environmental movement was born that day. The U.S. EPA was brought into being by the end of that very year.

The premise of Earth Day is this: Everyone is responsible for cleaning up the earth. OK, that's reasonable. I too was taught as a child to clean up after myself, at home, work, or in the great outdoors, outdoors because nature belongs to everyone as a sacred trust from God. But Earth Day has become far more than that. It has become a religion. Now, it is said, the earth is dying and man has a duty to save it. The Christian Science Monitor, once a major newspaper, but now defunct, had this interior headline some years ago: ***Earth Day: Are you saving the planet or just showing off? Take our quiz. Are you making environmental choices in order to save the***

*planet or because you want to be seen with a green halo?*

I didn't take the quiz. But I still clean up after myself, especially in the outdoors, because that is indeed a sacred trust from God our Creator. I trust you do the same, and for the same reason. But when it comes to saving the earth, and saving all humanity that dwells on it, mankind is not capable of doing that. Only One is able:

Let us rise and sing of the One who alone is the Savior of the world: *ELH 348*.

Today is not International Transgender Visibility Day or Earth Day or any other thing born of the imagination or fears of man. Today is Easter, the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead. Today is **Heaven day for all the earth!**

## I

The **earth shook**. An angel rolled away the stone and broke the seal. The evil one was cast down. The angels rejoiced. Christ is risen from the dead! He has died for our sins and risen again for our justification. The whole world should be rejoicing.

The guards were petrified in their terror. They saw Him rise. As well armed as they were, they were far too weak to keep sealed in the One who had conquered death. But their terror subsided long enough for them to take a bribe from the chief priests to tell the lie that they had fallen asleep, and seen nothing. They had indeed witnessed the resurrection, but they feared men more than they feared

God. How can such things be? How can lies be told as truth? On the other hand, how is it different today?

Why does the whole world not rejoice that death, man's greatest enemy, has been overpowered by the resurrection of Jesus Christ? Who is so deceived by the lies of the world as to stay in bed this morning? Why would the guards not believe? Why would they shame themselves and say they were drunk and fell asleep? Why would they rather be thought negligent and incompetent than be seen as followers of Jesus? We can only shake our heads in wonder at man's stubbornness and self-destructive nature. Is evil really so powerful in this world that people can look the truth straight in the face and deny it? You tell me. **Deliver us from evil, O Lord.**

Is evil really so great? You look at the headlines of the last few weeks and months. You decide for yourselves. What **is** man **not** capable of doing to his fellow man?

The leaders of the Jewish nation and its Roman governor carried out the public murder of the only innocent man the earth has ever known. In its aftermath, the women went to Jesus' tomb the following morning. What else could they do? But they found the tomb empty that morning of the first day of the week. Well, not quite empty; Jesus' grave clothes, burial shroud, and an angel were there. The angel told them: "Do not be afraid. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He is risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid Him. But go, tell His disciples--and Peter--that He is going before you into Galilee; there you

will see Him, as He said to you.” The women were stunned by the news. They were afraid.

When Mary Magdalene came back she was still so shocked that she failed to recognize the Lord, thinking Him to be a gardener. She wept as if He were gone forever. So too the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, Thomas in the upper room, the other ten disciples who locked the doors of the very same room in which Jesus had given them His body and blood for the forgiveness of their sins. They cowered in fear. They were all afraid. They were sure evil had triumphed. They were busy listening to the world and its short-sighted, false wisdom. The world was treating this as just another ‘earth’ day, not the heaven day it truly was.

What did the witnesses of the Resurrection fear? Did they fear for their own Good Friday misdeeds, betrayal, and denial of Him? Or did their unease go deeper? Did they recognize that it wasn’t just the sins of the priests and elders that nailed Jesus to the cross? Did they feel in their bones that Jesus suffered and died on account of them also? Did they feel the **earth shake** and know - as we do today at the news of earthquakes and tornadoes, murders, beatings, and betrayals – that something is terribly wrong in the world? Did they know that if God were just, truly and only just and not also merciful, that what ails the world is traceable also to them? Were they perhaps afraid that indeed He had risen, and **left them** in their sin, fear, and doubt to swim in a sea of evil, as the lost had done in the days of Noah?

There is no end to the things we fear. **Without hope fear comes easily.** Why are people so bitterly opposed to each other? Everyone seems to have chosen sides today, each seeing in the other all that is wrong in the world. I suggest to you that the reason for it is that evil is closer to each of us than we want to believe; it is **impossible for us** to separate ourselves from it. Deliver us from evil, O Lord.

What if your spouse, children, friends, and neighbors knew all your secrets? What if you had to account for every minute of your time? What if all your secrets were exposed? What if your memory was played back for all to see and judge? Do you begin to see what the scribes and Pharisees feared? What caused the guards to lie? Why the women fled? Why the eleven, once bold, feared their own shadows? Do you see why so many are not willing to come into the Lord's presence this day?

Do not be afraid. For whatever is in your heart or has ever been, know this: **it was in Jesus' heart** to bear your guilt, to suffer, die, and rise again to free you from both sin and death. It was in Jesus' heart to deliver you from the evil that is in the world. He wants the whole world **to know and revere not Earth Day, but Heaven Day, this day, Easter,** when He conquered sin and death for all, **and saved the world.**

Behold, I tell you a mystery the world does not know. You were conceived in sin, born in the shadow of death. You lived in fear, enemies of God. But by His grace, you were brought to life in the waters of Holy Baptism (or if you weren't, you can be!). God's holy name and promise

became yours. You were joined to the death of Jesus Christ, **and also to His resurrection!** This morning you have hope as you wait for the fulfillment of the promise of everlasting life. You are confident. You know that in Christ there is deliverance from the evil that surrounds us and actively tries to draw us toward its gaping maw. This morning **you know that Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life.** No one will be delivered from evil except through Him. But **because you believe** the words of the angel this day, **you will be delivered from evil.**

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This Heaven Day you can depart without fear. You are not an enemy of God. Your guilt has been covered; your sins removed. **There is no one to accuse you, no one!** The secrets of your heart are all known to Jesus. Even as the first nail was driven into His hand He knew you as you are, loved you, and gave Himself for you. Now **He has risen that you may know your debt has been paid in full.** You recall the dark secrets of your deeds, but God has forgiven them for the sake of His beloved Son. What is more, **He has even forgotten them in the brightness of Easter morning!** You have nothing to fear. Christ is risen. He is risen indeed! In Him you have been delivered from evil. This is not Earth Day, dear Christian, this is Heaven Day. Yes, the world is dying, **but needlessly, because it has been saved.** You know that, and you are at peace with God. You will see His salvation. I say again, rejoice! Amen.

**Soli Deo Gloria**