

**Archbishop Allen H. Vigneron
Easter Homily
Blessed Sacrament Cathedral
April 12, 2009**

(As transcribed from digital audio recording at liturgy)

For myself, for Monsignor LeFevre, for all of us here, I want to wish everyone a very blessed Easter; I hope that these are days of great peace and joy in your families.

What good would life have been to us had Christ not come as our Redeemer? That's a small portion of what the deacons in all the churches throughout the world sang last night as part of the Exultet. What good would life have been to us if Christ had not come as this great Redeemer, had Christ not been raised from the dead? In this text from the Easter Exult, the Church gives us a sort of agenda, what I might refer to as our stage directions for how we should respond to the Good News we have just heard from the Gospel that Jesus is risen from the dead. This, what I call direction or agenda, sets for me the aim for my preaching. This morning, I hope to help you by my preaching in order to be able to take up this direction, in order to help you complete the agenda. I hope by my preaching to help you to make fully your own the sentiments which are expressed in this line from the Exultet, to help confirm you in your conviction that had Christ not come

as this great risen Redeemer, life would indeed not seem to have been very good at all. First of all, that He is this great Redeemer.

Christ truly is risen. There was a bodily rising, there was no corpse left in the garden tomb. Jesus is not an idea; he is not a symbol; he is not a myth. That seems very much to be the point that St. John has when he records all these very specific details. The burial cloth was in one place, the head cloth in another. He saw this; he testifies to it. The stone was rolled away and that witness that we have in the writing of John in his Gospel today is confirmed in the account we have of St. Peter's sermon from the Acts of the Apostles from the first reading today. He was there, he ran to the tomb and he then preached this Good News, and in fact, it is so true that he died for it. He was crucified in Rome eventually as his final and consummate witness to this truth, that he who had been crucified is no longer dead but he is risen and he will never die again. And as St. John says in the Gospel, this was in fulfillment of the Scripture that he had to rise from the dead.

The event we celebrate today is the whole point of everything God had done, everything all those actions that are recorded in the sacred Scripture from the very beginning, from even the creation of the world, to the call of Abraham, to the Exodus, to restoration of God's people from their exile in Babylon. It all was for

this day, for this moment, this great Redeemer. And, as St. Paul reminded us in the second reading from the text of the Colossians, this victory of Jesus over death that the Father gave him on Easter morning is not something that's his alone, some individual possession of which we have no part – quite the contrary. Baptism makes us members of the Body of Christ, members of the risen Jesus, and so, as Paul puts it so eloquently, we are raised with Christ, our life is with Christ, though now hidden, but with Christ. And when Christ our life appears at the end of time, then we too will appear with Christ in glory. He is our Redeemer, this wonderful Redeemer because he is risen and in baptism he has given us a share in this invincible, this immortal, this ever-triumphant life. And so we ask rhetorically the question: What good would life have been to us if Christ had not come to us as this risen Redeemer?

Because of this day, because of the Resurrection, the whole world looks different, because the whole world is different. The world is taken up now into Jesus who is victorious over everything that corrupts and blights our world. Not that the natural world is nothing or indeed that it's bad, but the world without Christ would look so pale, be so small, be so filled with tragedy. But Christ is risen and so the blight of the world, the power of death in the world is conquered. Our families, our homes are protected, the bonds of love that are so important to us between husband and

wives, parents and children, loved ones, friends. This world that is so beautiful we will not lose it even when we die because we have so great a Redeemer, Christ risen from the dead.

Sometimes when I read things in the newspaper or listen in other media about the Church, about the Christian faith, about Christian people, I am astounded at how little they really understand us. So often we are thought of, we are portrayed as a whole group of people that is existing simply for the propagation of a moral code. Well, yes, we have a moral code but that's not who we are – we are members of the risen Christ, we are a new people, a new human race. We live a particular moral code because we have a new existence, because the world is different for us and it's not in our heads that it is different – it is in the world that there is this difference because Christ is in the world and Christ is risen. He is the new Adam and the world is better than it was even on the day it came out of God's shop, fresh. This day, Easter day, God has remade the world and remade us, and that's why we say what good would life have been to us had there been no Jesus, had Christ not come as our Redeemer?

This is exemplified for us, this attitude, this heart and mind expressed in the Exultet by those who were baptized last night, the neophytes, the newborns. They

asked to be baptized, they renounced Satan and all the glories of this world, this passing world, and said that they believe in the Father, in Jesus his Son, and in the Holy Spirit, and they were baptized into the death of Jesus, they went down into the water and they come out alive in his Resurrection, and by that they said, what we all say as Christians, that Jesus is worth my everything, he is worth everything I have and everything I am. The neophytes made last night the profession of faith we all share in, that without this risen Jesus I am nothing but with him I have everything and I would rather lose all else than lose Jesus. This has been the faith of the Church from the beginning, this is what the apostles believed and this why almost all of them were martyred and indeed all of them went to prison. This is the attitude of heart and mind of the great heroes of our faith from the first centuries – Ignatius of Antioch, Felicity and Perpetua – the great women martyrs of Carthage, Agnes, Sebastian – our heroes and not just those heroes of a long time ago people who are heroes of our own time, people whose names have appeared in newspapers and get mentioned on the radio, people like the great Mexican martyr Toribio Romo, people like the great martyr Maximilian Kolbe, Edith Stein, martyrs of the Third Reich. They all thought and felt what good would life have been to us if Christ had not come as our Redeemer? That's the grace of this day, the grace that God asks each of us to take possession of again, to let that question be our

question and answer it this way: It wouldn't be any good had Christ not come as our Redeemer.

In just a minute or two I will ask you to reaffirm your baptism promises and in each of the six "I do"s, let all of us answer the question – life wouldn't have been good had Christ not come – but he did come and so, that's everything. And then, at the last, at the consummation of this Easter service we offer the Holy Eucharist, the very Passover, the death and rising of Jesus, his risen flesh and blood become present here in our midst and we offer this new Passover sacrifice and this is the moment for you and me to think of this rhetorical question: What good would life have been to us without this Jesus, without this Eucharistic bread and wine, without the flesh and blood of Jesus to be my food and drink? What good would it have been had Christ not come as our Redeemer? And in eating the body of Jesus and in drinking his blood, in sharing in the new Passover feast we affirm and we are confirmed that the world is different for us because the world is filled with Christ and he is our all.

Christ is risen from the dead, he has appeared to Simon Peter.

Peace be with you all. Amen.