

From the Desk of Father Jeff



**“This is the day the Lord has made;
let us rejoice and be glad.” -Psalm 118**

As we gather on this Easter Sunday, my heart is filled with a profound sense of gratitude. As we celebrate this most holy of days, we are not merely a congregation; we are a family. There is a warmth in this sacred space that goes beyond the beautiful flowers and the joyful music—it is the unmistakable presence of the Risen Christ living within a community that truly loves one another.

This past week, we walked the path of the Paschal Triduum together. From the washing of the feet on Holy Thursday to the somber veneration of the Cross on Good Friday, and finally to the radiant light of the Easter Vigil, I was deeply moved by the devotion you showed. The beauty of our liturgies was not found just in the ritual, but in the way you entered into them with sincerity. To see our sanctuary go from darkness into the light of the Resurrection was a powerful reminder that we never walk through the darkness of life alone.

At the very center of our life together stands the Holy Eucharist. It is the source and the summit of everything we do. Every time we gather around the altar, the "family meal" of the Church, we are nourished by the Real Presence of Jesus. It is this Bread of Life that sustains our parish family, giving us the strength to be witnesses of hope in a world that so desperately needs it. In the breaking of the bread, our eyes are opened, and we recognize the Lord walking beside us.

Nowhere is the hope of the Resurrection more visible than when I look out from the altar during Sunday Mass. To see the pews filling—not just with familiar, beloved faces, but with a growing number of seekers and returning faithful—is a profound testament to the Holy Spirit's work in our church. There is a specific kind of "Easter joy" in a crowded church; it is the sound of a family growing.

I am especially moved by the increasing number of young people and families who have made this parish their home. The cry of babies in the back of the church or the sight of many more youth serving at the altar isn't just "noise" or "activity"—it is the heartbeat of a church that is truly alive. Seeing young parents pass on the flame of faith to their children reminds me that the promise of Easter is eternal. The life of a parish happens between the Sundays, too. Our parish facilities are humming with activity for all ages—

from our vibrant youth ministry nights to our scripture studies. This isn't just "busy-ness"; it is the community of the Upper Room, gathered in fellowship and study, waiting for the Spirit to move.

None of this would be possible without the amazing work of our staff. I can't thank them enough. They labor, often behind the scenes, with a commitment and a sense of mission that inspires me. I also want to thank our many dedicated volunteers. Whether you are catechizing our children, assisting at Mass, or simply making sure the coffee is hot and donuts are set after Mass, you are the hands and feet of the Risen Christ.

Perhaps the most "Easter" quality of our parish is the growing sense of the call to works of mercy. We are not a community that looks inward; we are a community that looks outward. I see the hope of the Resurrection in the way you respond to those in need—the hungry, the lonely, and the marginalized. I am especially inspired by your support and enthusiasm for our newest ministry, the Labouré of Love Mobile Ministry.

When we feed the poor or comfort the grieving, we are announcing to the world that death and despair do not have the final word. Our increasing commitment to these works shows that we understand the true meaning of the Gospel: that Christ is risen, and therefore, we must rise to meet the needs of our brothers and sisters.

I want to thank each of you for the part you play in making this parish a home. Whether you are a lifelong parishioner or a visitor joining us for the first time today, you are a vital part of this body. Your presence, your prayers, and your "Easter joy" are the greatest gifts you could offer.

Easter tells us that "He is not here; He has risen." But in another sense, because of you, He *is* here. He is here in your kindness, your service, and your presence.

Every time a new family joins us, every time a volunteer says "yes," and every time we reach out in mercy, we are shouting *Alleluia* without saying a word. Thank you for allowing me to see the hope of Easter in you every single day.

On behalf of the clergy team and staff of St. Catherine Labouré Parish, I pray that you and your family have a blessed Easter!