

Easter Sunday (2026)

By day, it distressed him, but the nights were even worse. He had betrayed his dearest friend. Not privately, not secretly, but blatantly, out in the open for all to see. It was too late to say, "I'm sorry." His friend was dead.

Peter tossed sleeplessly. Outside, he could hear Jerusalem stirring to life. The city he had once loved, he now detested. It held too many painful memories, impossible to erase.

"How could I have so utterly shamed myself? How could I? Peter, you coward!" For the thousandth time, he cursed himself. *"He was my friend! How could I have done this to my friend?"*

In his mind's eye, he could see Jesus riding that donkey, down the hill into Jerusalem to the cheers of thousands. He saw him in hot anger overturning coin-laden tables in the temple.

He recalled the blind made to see, the lame given to walk, the loathsome lepers' scaly skin turned baby-soft with a gentle touch. He could feel the Master's hand on his shoulder after a long day of caring for the multitudes.

His soothing and supportive words repeated themselves in his mind, *"Thanks, Peter, for your help today. You are a faithful friend ... a faithful friend ... a faithful friend."*

Tears began to well up in Peter's eyes. Faithful? Friend? Me?

When the High Priest's soldiers had tried to arrest Jesus, Peter had defended his Master with a sword. Soon after, when a servant girl had challenged him, he swore, ever knowing the man, with an oath.

He compounded his cowardly lie until the cock crowed, and Jesus' eyes from far across the courtyard met his— disappointed and disillusioned.

He escaped from the High Priest's home into the dark streets. He ran until he could run no more—until he had flung himself onto the cobbled streets weeping uncontrollably.

Later that morning, as he watched from a safe distance, they mocked and tormented his friend, nailing his hands and feet with spikes of steel, and suspending him from a cross until his life was spent. Peter could not bear another day in this city!

The thin light of dawn appeared under his door. Night was finally over; today, he would depart. Today, he would run away, back to the only life he knew. Today, Peter would leave this city of blood—never to return.

When the door suddenly shook, Peter reached for his sword and quietly took his place behind it. *"Peter? John? It's Mary! Let me in."*

He unbolted the door, and Mary slipped inside. She took several deep breaths and announced her message: *"They've stolen the body! Jesus' body is gone, and we don't know where they've put him!"*

John, who was wide-awake by now, looked at Peter and then threw on some clothes. Peter was out the door running, down the streets, tearing around corners, headed for the garden tomb where Jesus' body had been laid.

John was close behind. Younger and faster, John soon outdistanced Peter. By the time he got to the tomb, John was standing outside. The huge stone, designed to prevent desecration of the tomb, was rolled away.

Peter cautiously entered. It took a moment for his eyes to adjust to the dimness of the limestone cave. Peter looked at John and motioned to him

How extraordinary! If the tomb had been robbed and the body stolen, one would have expected the wrappings to be nowhere in sight—perhaps strewn in haste around the narrow stone room. Yet here they were, neatly folded as if no longer needed.

John looked at Peter. Peter looked at John. He could catch the faint smile playing at the corners of John's mouth. *What if...? What if?*

Peter hurried back into Jerusalem—each step was quicker than the one before. *What if?*

As Peter turned the corner onto the street where he was staying, he saw a figure waiting for him at the door. A *very familiar* figure— it was Jesus! And Peter *ran* to meet him!

Jesus Christ himself waits for us each day in the Blessed Eucharist. There he is *really, truly, and substantially present, with his Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity.*

There he is to be found with all the splendor of his glory, *for Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again.*

Amen! Alleluia!