



**The Fourth Sunday of Easter (C)**  
**May 8, 2022**  
***The Rev. Dr. Christian Brocato, Rector***

Let us pray: O God, “In the power of the Resurrection, may the depths of the tomb be for us womb of eternal life.”  
We pray, Amen.

This prayer comes from St. Meinrad Archabbey in Southern Indiana. I heard it one morning last week while praying with the monks on their YouTube Channel. It impacted me so much that I went back and reviewed it over and over until I copied it correctly.

In this prayer, “May the depths of the tomb be for us the womb of eternal life,” there is the profound notion of the “power of the Resurrection” during this Easter Season. There is the reference to the “depths of the tomb” of Jesus, that dark place into which Jesus was laid and sealed until Easter morning.

There is the theological reference to the tomb as a “womb of eternal life.” For me and I hope for you that that is a WOW on this the Fourth Sunday of Easter. The tomb of Christ became the very place from which sprang the life-giving force of eternal life.

From our mothers’ wombs, the life-giving force for each of us was birthed. Many of us have tender memories of our mothers and the family system from which we came. Others of us may have not had such positive experiences in life.

Today, we call attention to maternal aspects of love, understanding and care. In the prayer we will shortly offer, we also call attention to those mother figures in life, those who have offered maternal affection much appreciated.

From a mother’s womb comes forth new life. From the womb of the tomb of Jesus came forth the “womb of eternal life” and the voice of the Risen One who calls us to newness of life.

Throughout Holy Week, there were voices every night in downtown Grand Rapids. As we offered Services every night of the week, protests over the killing of Patrick Lyoya were voiced in our city.

On Good Friday morning, the staff discovered that one of our Sextons, Wendell Chivis, was diagnosed with lesions on his brain. Wendell had brain surgery Tuesday of Easter Week.

Also on Good Friday morning, a telephone poll at the edge of our parking lot collapsed onto the GRCC building across the alley. There was chaos on Winchester Alley throughout much of the day, believe me.

Throughout Holy Week and into Easter Week, we held our parishioner, Baldwin Ogden, deep in prayer. On Thursday of Easter Week, I offered final prayers and anointed Baldwin for the last time. He passed on to eternal life the following Monday.

Yesterday, we bid a final farewell to our sister, Catherine Frerichs. Nearly two hundred of us gathered to celebrate a life well-lived and one loved and admired by her family and friends.

Continuing in life are deeply disturbing images of the loss of life and the destruction of whole ways of living in Ukraine. We continue to pray for an end to that war and other conflicts in various places in the world.

I share these events in the life because Jesus offers us the assurance of life in him through his resurrection even amidst the challenges of daily life. Without doubt, you carried your own needs and those of others to Easter and carry them still. I pray that Easter and these weeks since that glorious day have been life-giving for you and rich in the grace of the Resurrection.

We need the hope that Christ's Resurrection brings to us throughout our lives of faith. We need this community of faith steeped in tradition and liturgy, a community which gathers to hear God's Word and to feast at the Banquet Table of Life.

On Easter Sunday, I ended my homily with, "Let us embrace the light of the Resurrection and allow it to transform us in new and remarkable ways!" Does not our world and so many of us in it need transformation of hearts and minds into the peace of Christ through the power of his Resurrection? I believe the answer is "yes," as ask another question: "How do we listen and learn to hear the voice of the Good Shepherd?"

John's Gospel reminds us that Jesus is the Good Shepherd, a kind of agrarian image and one which is as pastoral as any I can imagine. It echoes the most beloved psalm in the Bible, Psalm 23, which we prayed this morning. It also echoes a powerful text in the Prophet Ezekiel: "<sup>15</sup>I myself will feed my flock and make them lie down... <sup>16</sup>I will seek out the lost, bring back the strays, bind up the wounded, and strengthen the weak." (Chapter 34: 15-16) Sheep hear the voice of their shepherd who calls them to safety and shelter, and they follow.

Do we not need safety and shelter amidst the turmoil of life? Do we not need the security of knowing that there is one voice that we can count on, one voice that represents unconditional love, one voice that calls us home, a place of safety and shelter? John 10:26 tells us: "My sheep hear my voice. I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish."

A commentator tells us that "The voice of the Good Shepherd is a voice that liberates rather than oppresses... The voice says, 'You belong to me already. No one can snatch you out of my hand.' Secure in this belonging, we are free to live the abundant life of which Jesus spoke earlier in John: 'I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.'" (John 10:10). (Elizabeth Johnson, [www.workingpreacher.org/commentaries/revised-common-lectionary/fourth-sunday-of-easter-3/commentary-on-john-1022-30-5](http://www.workingpreacher.org/commentaries/revised-common-lectionary/fourth-sunday-of-easter-3/commentary-on-john-1022-30-5))

Today as we do every Sunday at worship, we celebrate the abundant life of God in Jesus Christ, the Risen One, and the one who calls us to follow him without reserve. Friends in Christ, I am well aware that following without reserve is not easy.

The pulls and tugs of life including the challenges of the pandemic often create stumbling blocks in our lives. We can be sure that the voice of the Shepherd will lead us around each and every one of them. A great hymn text reminds us, "Jesus calls us o'er the tumult of life's wild restless seas. Day by day, his sweet voice soundeth, saying "Christian, follow me." (The Hymnal 549)

Jesus rose from the dead that we might have life in abundance. He calls us day by day. Let us hear his voice of life, make it our own and carry it into the world. Amen.