

“YEAR OF THE EUCHARIST”—CELEBRATING EASTER JOY DAILY—Fr. Steve Lape

I was thinking of a classic hymn the other day which, for me, captures the essence of Easter joy so poetically and beautifully. It’s called “The Strife Is O’er,” and its opening lyrics offer this thought: “The strife is o’er, the battle done; now is the Victor’s triumph won! Songs of rejoicing have begun. Alleluia!” This underlines why Easter is the holiest and most joyful day on the Church’s calendar—that Jesus, the Son of God, our Lord & Savior, has overcome tremendous darkness of suffering, sin and death to rise above it all, giving us all new hope for new life beyond all our sufferings & struggles. It never ceases to amaze me how one can love us all so much—to go through all that He went through out of love for us! Eternity is now open to all who stay close to Him—in thought, word and deed. There could never be a greater gift that one could give us than eternal life, joy & peace in Heaven with God! That’s the joy we all celebrate as Christians—not only on Easter Sunday, but in every Mass, as Jesus continues to pour forth His love upon us at every Eucharistic celebration: through His words of life from Holy Scripture, through the gift of our presence to encourage each other in prayer & belief, and through Jesus’ Body & Blood to keep us strong & nourished in our long journey towards our ultimate goal of heavenly glory!

All of this should inspire us to reflect more on this greatest of gifts:

- ◇ How might our Savior be inviting us to share more of ourselves in that light-filled joy of resurrected victory?
- ◇ Are there hurts that still need healing—either recent ones or ones that have been burdening us for a long time?
- ◇ How do we see the Mass—as a gift from Jesus to keep us close to Him? A celebration of life & hope? A major way to convey our thanks to God for all the countless blessings we’ve received? A central means to keep our faith in Christ strong? Or do we see it as more of a burden to attend? An obligation? A bore?
- ◇ What talents do we have that God may have more

use for in strengthening our parish community, in sharing the Good News about our Risen Lord?

- ◇ Do we look at each day with an attitude which suggests a resounding “Alleluia”—a gift from God and a new opportunity to grow in Christ’s love & to share that love, or do we look at each day more with an “Ugh!”, with each day being “just another day,” with more tasks to accomplish, more burdens to face & carry, more troubles to wallow in?

Easter is a joy to embrace and share every day--to all we meet. There will never be anyone in life who can love us more than Jesus Christ, our Risen Light of the world! As Christians, our everyday attitude should be more along the lines of the final verse in “The Strife is O’er”: “Lord, by the stripes which wounded you, free from death’s sting your servants, too, that we may live and sing to you. Alleluia!”

