



## Easter Sunday

April 12, 2009

By Father Richard Walsh

As most of you already know I grew up in Ireland and I am proud of my Irish heritage. Most of you also know that I make a pilgrimage to my homeland each summer. When I am in Ireland people often ask me where I minister in the States. When I tell them that I work in Orlando they immediately make mention of Disney. They sometimes comment, you are really lucky ---I am sure you must visit Disney World all the time. I respond, "about once every two weeks. In truth the last time I paid a visit to Disney World was about fifteen years ago. I am not about to find fault with Disney, that's just who I am.

When most people mention Disney the image that comes to mind immediately is that of Mickey Mouse. For me, the image that comes to mind is The Haunted Mansion. I know all of you have visited the Mansion at one time or another. Remember, a large group is ushered into a windowless room; the door slams shut and out of nowhere comes a booming voice which says, "**You are in a room that has no doors and no windows.**" This mantra is repeated a couple of times and is followed by a loud laugh. What if that were indeed true; that you found yourself in a room that had no doors and no windows? In other words, no way out.

Two weeks ago I celebrated a funeral Mass in my former parish for a lady who had been a good friend at one point in my life. I hadn't seen much of her over the last

several years. However, she asked that I celebrate her funeral Mass. Only the cremated remains of her body were present in the church for the Mass. When the Mass was finished we processed to a little cemetery behind the church for the burial of Bobbie's ashes. After we offered the committal prayers the ashes were emptied into a small hole in the ground, some clay was pushed in on top of the ashes and then the original grass sod was placed on top of the clay. When the sod was clamped down it looked as if the original piece of ground had never been disturbed. There was such a finality attached to the whole event. The thought that came to my mind at that moment was "Bobbie you are now in a room where there is no door and no windows." Perhaps you often felt the same on the occasion of the death and burial of a loved one.

If indeed you have felt powerless on the occasion of the death of a loved one, then today's feast should have special meaning for you. A few moments ago we sang the response, *"This is the day the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it."* Easter Sunday is indeed the apex of our Christian journey. We just heard the Gospel story (*John 20, 1-9*) of Peter and John rushing toward the tomb of Jesus on that Easter day. In reference to John, upon entering the tomb of Jesus we are told, *"He saw and he believed."* What did he see? Nothing more than an empty tomb and the burial cloths of Jesus lying on the floor.

That evidence was sufficient to convince John that Jesus had overcome death—that he had defeated the ultimate enemy. The subsequent appearances on the risen Jesus gradually convinced the other disciples of the reality of this profound mystery.

With the passage of time those original disciples came to the realization that the death and resurrection of Jesus were like the two sides of the same coin and that together they constituted the saving mystery by which we are freed from our sins. We often refer to those two events in the life of Jesus as the Paschal, or the Easter mystery. As Catholics we are brought into relationship with that "saving event" through our Baptism. As St. Paul says in Romans 6:3, *"Are you not aware that we who have been baptized in Christ Jesus are baptized into his death."*

Of course, in and of itself, the sacrament of Baptism is only the beginning of the process. How we live each day is either a confirmation or a rejection of our Baptismal promise. We are called to conform our life to that of the Christ who died and rose on our behalf. St. Paul sums up the challenge of our spiritual journey in our brief second reading today:

*"Brothers and Sisters, If then you were raised with Christ seek what is above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Think of what is above, not of what is on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ your life appears, then you too will appear with him in glory."*