

## FROM THE PASTOR

Dear Brothers and Sisters



On March 21, 2017 a Greek team announced the completion of the restoration of the tomb of Jesus, a project which took nearly a year to complete.

The work was led by the National Technical University of Athens, and the restoration team removed hundreds of years of candle soot, as well as marble slabs encasing the stone bench where Jesus' body was placed after his crucifixion and death. The cave where Jesus was buried lies beneath a shrine called the Edicule, which itself is located within the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, in the Christian Quarter of Jerusalem's Old City.

I first visited this shrine in the year 2000. I had accompanied a group of 100 youth from NJ, and after celebrating Mass with the Pope Saint John Paul II in Galilee, we travelled south to Jerusalem, to pray at the Holy Sepulcher.

We waited on line for hours, slowly inching our way forward amidst the throngs of people, weaving our way around the stone columns of the church, towards the entrance of the cave where Jesus was buried.

On finally arriving to the entrance to the Edicule, one has to bend down to pass through the low entrance, and finally, there it is! A stone slab! There is nothing else there!

The place is not a "tomb." It is not a cemetery. It is not a place to pay respect for the dead! A dead body did once lay on that stone slab, but it is not there now.

Each one of us has come to the empty tomb today. We are here on Easter Sunday morning because the body of that dead man, Jesus of Nazareth, that once lay on that slab, is Risen.

It is not enough to see a dead man come back to life! Lazarus was raised from the dead, and that didn't change anyone!

The women who went to the tomb on that first Easter morning, and the Disciples to whom Jesus then appeared, were not changed because they saw Jesus Risen.

What changed their lives, and changed the course of human history, is the fact that this man who had died and is Risen is in fact God himself.

God, who did not create death, but life, has entered into death, and overcome it. Jesus Christ, true God and true man, makes a new creation. We have, through him, access to Eternal Life.

The disciples would believe, as we believe, not because they saw, but because they themselves became partakers of His Resurrection. We too, this morning, are invited to experience the Resurrection of Christ within us. There is no suffering, no anguish, no grief, no loss, no misfortune, no sin, no sadness, darkness or doubt, that has not been overcome by Christ Risen. He Rose from death for us, fallen humanity, that we can truly experience that God is with us always, that we can trust completely in Him. Through Christ alive here with us, we can experience the Love of God and abandon ourselves to Him in everything that happens in our life.

Christ is Risen, Alleluia!

Christ stands at the right hand of the Father, interceding for each one of us, no matter who we are. God loves you.

We do not need to go to the Holy Sepulcher to experience this. The Good News of the Resurrection comes to meet us here today in Woodcliff Lake. Happy Easter!

Fr. Sean