God saw that it was good. And it is, isn’t it? It is, isn’t it! The world around us ready to burst into Spring (I hope, I believe!) That beautiful full moon last night. Cardinals and Robins singing, all living creatures, great and small. What we saw during that moving presentation of Genesis is just a small sampling of the incredible things God created.

Then, God created the human family. You and me. Created in the image of God. How could it not be good? God found human creation very good. When God looks at you, he sees that original goodness first and foremost, even when we can’t see it in the mirror. Whether walking in the countryside, traveling near or far, looking out at all of you every week at Mass. It is very good!

God invites us tonight, and every day to see and celebrate the goodness. Don’t let the havoc sin brings about ever overshadow fundamental goodness.

We heard how God provided the sheep for Abraham’s sacrifice. God provides the lamb, the perfect sacrifice every time we offer the Eucharist at this altar.

God led the Hebrew slaves out of Egypt, through the Red Sea, to freedom. In our baptism, God leads us out of the grip of sin and death, into the freedom of a life of grace, lived in a welcoming, loving, forgiving community.

We just sang about it: God shows us the path of life, God sets us free.

Lest we forget, Isaiah reminded us: God establishes a covenant of peace with us, calls us to refreshing waters, invites us to a feast.

Ezekiel – strange prophet, but some of the most moving images in the Bible -- our being sprinkled with clean water, given a new heart. I have felt it happen – the refreshment, the cleansing, the new heart loving in new and deeper ways. I hope you have too.

And St. Paul, what he couldn’t pack into a letter! Who else could so beautifully draw the line from our baptism to new life in Christ? We die and rise with Christ, the old self, slave to sin, buried in the waters of baptism. From the waters we rise in union with Christ in the resurrection, living for God in Christ Jesus. You know of course that St. Paul didn’t just write about these things. He helped people in Corinth, in Philippi, in Galatia and all around the Eastern Mediterranean to discover the new life, to support one another in that life, to call others into
community, into communion, into a life of grace. He’s still doing it today every
time his letters come to life at Mass.

Tonight we listen, we reflect, we sing our way through the ages, through salvation
history.

We enter into the discoveries about God’s love that those before us have made
throughout the ages, from the first realization that creation as a gift from God to
the gift of new creation every time someone approaches the baptismal font, every
time we receive God’s forgiveness and are invited to begin anew.

But let’s also join Mary Magdalen and her two friends. These three faithful women
went to the tomb heartbroken, overcome by grief. Imagine them trying to figure
out – through the tears, how will we ever roll back that huge stone, so that we can
anoint his body?? But wait. They see the stone rolled away, an angelic figure on
hand to comfort them. “He has been raised, just as he told you.” You can be sure
they let the story tumble out with excitement over and over and over!

In the unfolding of our Easter season readings, going to the empty tomb is a great
prelude. Then we hear how his disciples saw Christ after his death, alive, risen.
Two disciples on the road to Emmaus walk with him, and sit down to share a meal.
Thomas is invited to touch his resurrected & glorified body. They all share meals
with him again, and are then sent to proclaim the Good News.

Tomorrow morning we’ll hear a passage in the Acts of the Apostles about those
who experienced all Christ did in his earthly ministry, and who then were chosen
to be witnesses to his resurrection.

But if you want to really be able to sing ‘Jesus Christ is Risen Today’ as our
celebration ends tonight, here is the secret. Those readings are not just intended to
be a review of history. We aren’t just re-enacting things from long ago.

God is continuing to create this very minute, with every new star born in the
universe, with every seed that breaks open, every blossom that blooms, every new
born baby that cries. God is still saying, it is good, including each day he gives us
another day.

I know, there are many ugly things in our world. Jesus suffering, death and
resurrection didn’t forever end all other suffering. But it released the power of
redemption. It opened the way for all suffering to contribute to redemption, when
we bring it to the cross. We join our sacrifices with Christ’s sacrifice, self-giving
love takes hold. That divine love, sacrificing, self-giving love draws us into union with Christ, and that my friends changes everything.

So long as humans have been given the precious gift of free will, and really, how could a loving God deny us freedom? So long as we have free will, there will be sin and suffering in our world. Some will make loving, humble choices, but others will choose self-glorification over glorifying God. Some will acknowledge the true God, a God who says over and over through history: “do not be afraid”. But some will choose fear and hate over trust and love. Some will reject sin, and refuse to be mastered by evil, but others will fall for the empty promises of Satan.

Tonight we celebrate God’s response to our fallen nature: Redemption. Sacrifice, love, mercy, forgiveness, resurrection and new life. The great Paschal mystery. It not only touches the effects of our sin. It helps us when we see the innocent suffer for no apparent reason. Or when we are crushed by the brokenness of the world with no explanation why. It was an innocent one suffering who redeemed the world. Suffering in innocence but offering it to God is redemptive beyond our deepest efforts to understand.

Tonight, God is still providing the sacrifice at hundreds of thousands of altars. Participating in that grace, as we join our sacrifices with Christ’s, our lives can be filled with new possibility and meaning.

God is still leading people out of slavery, and there is hope for those in slavery this very minute, wherever they are, whatever kind of slavery.

The call to the water, and to the feast, is ringing out this very moment.

That new heart Ezekiel speaks of is meant to beat in us.

The stone has been rolled away, the tomb is empty.

Jesus has risen from the dead, just as he said.

But we don’t have to go to Galilee to experience him, to eat with him.

Hi invites us to renew our baptismal promises and head to the font, to life-giving, refreshing water. He will join us in our prayers. Christ sings in and through us. He will be the host, the sacrifice, the priest making the offering, giving us his precious body and blood. We will eat with the Risen Lord tonight. And then, the Lord will send us forth with Alleluias, because he has chosen us to be his witnesses. Witnesses to share the Good News with our sisters and brothers.
We began spreading the light among all in the congregation. Now we are called to take the light of God’s love from here into a world so in need of a ray of light, a word of hope.

Lord, make us faithful, fruitful stewards of the mysteries, help us share the light, and be light in this world.