Peter said to the people: The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified his servant Jesus, whom you handed over and denied in Pilate’s presence when he had decided to release him. You denied the Holy and Righteous One and asked that a murderer be released to you. The author of life you put to death, but God raised him from the dead; of this we are witnesses. Now I know, brothers, that you acted out of ignorance, just as your leaders did; but God has thus brought to fulfillment what he had announced beforehand through the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ would suffer. Repent, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be wiped away.”

Reading 2: 1 John 2:1-5A
My children, I am writing this to you so that you may not commit sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous one. He is expiation for our sins, and not for our sins only but for those of the whole world. The way we may be sure that we know him is to keep his commandments. Those who say, “I know him,” but do not keep his commandments are liars, and the truth is not in them. But whoever keeps his word, the love of God is truly perfected in him.

The two disciples recounted what had taken place on the way, and how Jesus was made known to them in the breaking of bread.

While they were still speaking about this, he stood in their midst and said to them, “Peace be with you.” But they were startled and terrified and thought that they were seeing a ghost. Then he said to them, “Why are you troubled? And why do questions arise in your hearts? Look at my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me and see, because a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you can see I have.” And as he said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. While they were still incredulous for joy and were amazed, he asked them, “Have you anything here to eat?” They gave him a piece of baked fish; he took it and ate it in front of them.

He said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the law of Moses and in the prophets and psalms must be fulfilled.” Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures. And he said to them, “Thus it is written that the Christ would suffer and rise from the dead on the third day and that repentance, for the forgiveness of sins, would be preached in his name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.”
HOMILY

Bubba was always bragging to his boss, “I know everyone there is to know. Just name someone, anyone, and I know them.” Tired of his boasting, his boss called his bluff, “Ok, Bubba, how about Tom Cruise?” To which, Bubba replied, “Sure enough, Tom and I are old friends, and I can prove it.”

So they fly to Hollywood and knock on Tom Cruise's door. He opens the door, welcomes them and shouts, “Bubba! Great to see you! You and your friend come right in and join me for lunch!” Although very impressed, Bubba's boss is still a bit skeptical. Afterwards, he tells Bubba that his knowing Cruise was just lucky.

“No, no, just name anyone else," Bubba says. “President Obama,” his boss quickly retorts. “Yes,” Bubba says, “I know him, and former President Bush, also. Let's fly to Washington.” At the White House, Obama spots Bubba on the tour and motions him and his boss over, saying, “Bubba, what a surprise! I was just on my way to an important meeting, but you and your friend come on in for a cup of coffee first and we’ll catch up.”

Well, the boss is quite shaken by now, but still not totally convinced. Afterwards, he again expresses his doubts to Bubba, who once again begs him to name anyone else. “The Pope,” his boss replies. “Sure!” says Bubba, “I’ve known Pope Francis a long time.” So they fly to Rome and are with a huge group of people in Vatican Square when Bubba says, “This will never work. I can't catch the Pope's eye among all these people. Tell you what. I know all the guards here, so let me just go upstairs and I'll come out on the balcony with the Pope.” Bubba disappears into the crowd headed toward the Vatican. Sure enough, about half an hour later, he emerges with Pope Francis on the balcony.

By the time Bubba returns, he finds that his boss had fainted to the ground and is surrounded by paramedics. Working his way to his boss’ side, Bubba asks him, “What happened?” His boss looks up and says, “I was doing fine until you and the Pope came out on the balcony and the man next to me said, ‘Who's that on the balcony with Bubba?’”

Everybody seemed to know Bubba, and what’s more, enjoyed knowing him, personally – a personal relationship. If you were here on Palm Sunday, you may remember what I said about Jesus wanting to have a personal relationship with each of us … with me, Father, and each and every one of you. A personal relationship – because He loves and cares about each and every one of us, and wants us all to share everlasting life with Him. A personal relationship, so we are meant to share in the peace, the joy and the hope that this Easter season is especially meant to bring us … and to help others share in it also. Since we are still in the Easter season for several more weeks, I’d like to spend a few minutes with you on Living the Easter Season with Peace, Joy and Hope.

Living the Easter season with peace. When you look at the events taking place in the world around us, you might think this is an especially difficult time to embrace peace. It’s often said that peace starts from within, and we need to be at peace with ourselves in order to effect peace outside ourselves, to others and in the overall world. Throughout Luke’s Gospel, primarily written for Gentile congregations, he associates Jesus with the concept of peace. Right at the Gospel’s beginning, Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, prophesized that through God’s compassion, “a dawning from on high will visit us, … to guide our feet onto the path of peace.” And then, several times during His ministry, Jesus told others,
“Your faith has saved you. Go in peace.” And now, in today’s Gospel reading, we have Jesus trying to calm the disciples with a “Shalom,” translated as “Peace be with you.” He saw that they were startled and terrified – in fact, this is the third Sunday in a row, including Easter, where we hear of the Resurrection of Jesus causing confusion and/or fear among His disciples. He even asked them, “Why are you troubled? And why do questions arise in your hearts?” With our personal relationships with Jesus, consider Him asking each of us those same questions, here, today, “What troubles you? What keeps you from being at peace? What questions arise in your hearts?” Our lives can often be quite busy and confused, leading to possible inner turmoil and struggles, or we may be bothered by events of the past that haunt us. We may be tempted to look for comfort and solace where we shouldn’t, maybe a questionable lifestyle or one with arbitrary “quick fixes” that solve little, if anything. Knowing Jesus can provide true peace – He offers us the peace of a real and personal relationship – through prayer and meditation and the sacrament of reconciliation, we can confide in Him, seek direction and guidance from Him, and ask forgiveness of our misdirection and misdeeds.

Living the Easter season with joy. When are we filled with joy in our life? Think about it – it may be when we are internally and externally at peace – there’s that word again – or maybe when others close to us are at peace, or maybe when we have a special relationship with another person. It may be some combination of those factors, or maybe something altogether different. With our personal relationship with Jesus, each of us is offered that peace, offered that love, offered that joy. Even better, Jesus will never abandon His love for each of us, no matter what we do, no matter how much we reject that love and peace. For our sake, He came into this world for us, He suffered and gave His life for us, so that our sins could be forgiven. For our sake, He asks that we keep His commandments, to love God and to love our neighbor. But, we are human, and we can mess up and sin … John tells us in today’s second reading that we have Jesus as our Advocate with the Father. And, in today’s Gospel, “repentance, for the forgiveness of sins, would be preached in His name to all the nations.” Each of our lives can be filled with peace, with joy, through Jesus – and that leaves … hope.

Living the Easter season with hope. In the Old Testament, the people of Israel had their hope centered on their idea of a Messiah, a Savior. Although Jesus didn’t meet their expectations of a political Savior, the eternal salvation offered through His life and death offered something infinitely greater, while still fulfilling everything written about Him in the law of Moses and in the prophets and psalms, as Luke tells us today. Our Easter hope is based on the Resurrection message – God raised Jesus from the dead, and eternal salvation is offered to us also, through our baptism into the Body of Christ, as children of God. Our hope is that we too will share everlasting life with God when our earthly journey, our pilgrimage, is finished. Paul tells us that hope comes to sustain the Christian through this life of pilgrimage. And, we pray for others, friends, family members and all others, that they too will hear and accept the Good News of the Gospel, from us or others, so that they may also share in this eternal salvation, this everlasting life.

Putting it all together, we are meant to live our lives with Christian peace, joy and hope, and especially so during this great Easter season we are in. And we are meant to share that peace, joy and hope with others. So, let me offer some simple ways that you might especially express that, but I’m sure you can think of others. First, peace: during Mass later on, after the Lord’s Prayer, when Father says,
“The peace of the Lord be with you always,” how about a resounding, “And with your spirit.” And, at the end, when I say, “Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your life,” how about a resounding, “Thanks be to God!” And then, greet others when you leave church and maybe throughout the rest of the day with a “Shalom,” or even a simple, “Peace.” If you are troubled or seek further inner peace, or have some past misdeeds that need to be brought before God, please, please see a priest for sacramental reconciliation.

Second, joy: Jesus is present in our lives, in the people we meet, and especially in the Eucharist that we will share very shortly. When you come up for Communion later, how about a nice smile to express that joy, and an audible “Amen” to acknowledge that joy. If you are not receiving Communion, come up and fold your arms across your chest for a blessing. Later on, share some of that Easter joy with others you meet, at home or elsewhere. Find something in our parish to help out with, where you are helping others, especially if it’s new to you – Pittsford Food Cupboard, Saint’s Place, Youth Group, anywhere you can see the face of Jesus when helping others. Third, hope: continue on your faith journey by learning more about your faith, and while you are at it, help someone else on their journey also. Men – the 1st annual Men’s Conference is just 4 weeks away, at St John Fisher – at least look at the schedule and what is being offered and the list of vibrant speakers – I think it’s going to be very exciting! Men and women – there are still several Bible Study programs being offered, and there are some great CD’s on the Lighthouse Catholic Media rack in the Narthex – they make great companions on both commutes and trips.

During this Easter season, the Resurrection of Christ reminds us that we need to always celebrate our lives and those of others with Christian peace, joy and hope. Jesus has shown us by His Words and example how to do that but He doesn’t want us to stop at just knowing – He wants us to LIVE the message! And now, we continue that celebration, as Jesus did with His disciples, and as He does with us at our Eucharistic feast.