

Happy Easter! And thanks to all of you who chose to start your Easter Sunday off with us here at St. George/Jude. Whether this is your first time with us – or you 10<sup>th</sup> – whether you consider yourself a visitor or a life-long parishioner –

I do hope you feel comfortable worshipping with us – and if it isn't already – that you will consider making St. George/Jude your parish.

May your day be spent with love ones. Hopefully you will also have some time to yourself – to rest and renew yourself – and to spend some time thanking God for the many gifts you are blessed with.

I had one of the best experiences of my life about 7 years ago.

A parishioner at Holy Family was planning a surprise anniversary party for her parents – and she entrusted the job to me – of making sure they got to the party.

Fortunately, or so I thought, the parishioner's mother and father both happened to be Eucharistic ministers at the Mass just prior to the party. I then just had to find the excuse that would get them to go downstairs after Mass.

Since mom was a member of the staff, and dad was on the maintenance committee, I concocted the story about a leaky pipe I had discovered right before Mass – and needed them to look at it.

So down the stairs we went. I was so proud of myself for doing my part -- and as I threw open the doors everyone shouted "surprise" as they were supposed to. . .

However ---- I never expected that the surprise was really for my birthday – and not their anniversary. . . When I came to that realization – and scanned the room – I saw everyone who I would have chosen to spend my birthday with – including my mother.

It was sheer genius – as it took lots of people working together – plotting and planning to make this the success it was – and all practically under my nose.

All I could do was weep knowing that everyone who was involved – loved me enough to pull this off, weeks before my birthday so I would be so unsuspecting.

If there is one word that summarizes Easter – it could well be -- surprise!

All four of the Gospel writers, while emphasizing different aspects of the resurrection story – all make one thing very clear: Jesus resurrection was a big surprise not only for his enemies – but even for his closest followers.

In St. Luke's account which we just heard – the women who go to the tomb are surprised that the stone is already rolled away --- they are also surprised by the lack of Jesus' body in the tomb – and then they are further surprised by the appearance of two men dressed in dazzling garments.

All of this seemed like nonsense as they tried to explain it all to the apostles – some surprises are just too good to be true – and this one took place all because God loves us enough to pull it all off!

As Jim Neighbors used to say back in the 1960s sitcom Gomer Pyle: "surprise, surprise, surprise!"

So I think a fitting way to celebrate Easter and the coming 7 week Easter season – is to create surprises in our own lives and in the lives of those we love.

Starting with ourselves --- we can do things we do not ordinarily do. If we never read short stories, we might read one.

If we've never eaten sushi, or tofu, or okra – we could try it.

We could write a poem, sign up for a pottery class, play cards, go dancing, visit an art museum, work on our family tree, buy a hibiscus plant.

What would be the point of surprising ourselves during the Easter season?

It is one way for us to get out of our ruts and routines --- or if you will – to get us out of our tomb – our usual way of doing things.

Surprising ourselves is one way for us to grow, to be enlivened, to stretch beyond where we are. What an Easter kind of thing to do!

Then, let's put some element of surprise into someone else's life. . . by doing unexpected things around the house, the workplace, the parish, the neighborhood.

We can surprise others with phone calls, or visits, or by sending real notes (the kind you have to take the time to write AND mail!)

Someone once said, "The simplest meaning of Easter is that we are living in a world in which God has the last word."

And that last word may well be: surprise, surprise, surprise!

May you have a happy, and glorious Easter! And come back and see us again – soon!