

I had just started my classroom visit when one of the students suddenly leapt up from their seat shouting, **STOP! STOP! IT'S HAPPENING!** Immediately all the students got up from their desks and crowded around a mesh-covered aquarium set on a small table in the back of the classroom. Joining them I, too, looked in wonder at the event unfolding before our eyes. A butterfly was gradually emerging from its silky cocoon. Soon it spread out its beautiful wings and began flying around the aquarium. Some weeks earlier the students had found a caterpillar, brought it into the classroom, and setting up a habitat in the empty aquarium, settled in to watch the process of transformation as the caterpillar spun its cocoon and then entered it. Patiently, the students kept a daily vigil. Now the moment of revelation, of birth, of transformation had arrived!

The Resurrection of Jesus, and its gift of eternal life is the central tenet and mystery of our faith. Mystery is a truth of life we experience but stands beyond the power of words to fully capture. For example, love. We all know the experience of being loved or loving another. Yet how do you capture all that love is in words? Just because it can't be done, does not mean that love does not exist. We turn to analogy, poetry, metaphor, and music to express the "real" but beyond us mystery of love we cannot fully comprehend. So too, the Easter mystery of the Resurrection of Jesus.

The experience I shared with the grade school children of the transformation of the caterpillar into the butterfly is a metaphor through which we can enter into the mystery of the rising of Jesus to risen life and our sharing in it.

Out of instinct the caterpillar creates its cocoon where its journey from one form of life to another occurs. We, on the other hand, make a conscious choice to enter into the life of God as revealed in Jesus. Tonight (today) our Elect (these children) come to the waters of baptism. They (or their parents and god-parents) publicly choose Christ and the life of faith as members of the Church. We the already baptized also once again renew

that choice made by our parents and godparents, or if we were baptized as an adult, to renew that same choice in the baptismal promises in this Mass.

Entering the cocoon, the caterpillar undergoes the process of transformation in darkness handing itself over to the process of nature. Rising from the waters of baptism we, too, in faith are continually called to “hand over” our lives in faith to God as we journey towards the fullness of life. As Jesus himself tells us, “If anyone would be my follower that one must deny themselves, take up their cross daily, and follow in my footsteps.” Easter celebrates Jesus’ triumph **through** the cross, **through self-emptying love for God and others**. So, too, is to be our journey. But unlike the caterpillar, we are not alone.

In rising from the dead, Jesus breathed upon us the gift of the Spirit. In our faith journey of transformation towards the fullness of eternal life we do not journey alone. This is Easter’s joyful and consoling message. Jesus journeys with us through the Spirit. We experience the presence of Jesus with us along our life’s journey in a variety of ways as members of the church: the Scriptures (the Bible), the Sacraments, especially the Holy Eucharist, the transmission of God’s revelation entrusted to the teaching authority of the church (the pope and bishops), and the persons of each other outreach to those in need or from others in our need; the lifting up of another in prayer—all of these are experiences of Jesus with us in our “cocoon” journey of transformation.

Like the experience of seeing the butterfly emerge from its cocoon, our celebration of Easter today calls us to stop and see the surprising and unexpected signs of new life that suddenly spring forth around and within us today as signs of hope and promise pointing us ever onward toward our ultimate transformation; eternal life in Christ Jesus in our lives today.

Stop and smell the roses. Stop and contemplate a sunrise, a rainbow, an early morning or evening breeze. Stop and listen to the hymn of a songbird. Stop and revel in the hug of a child. **STOP! STOP! IT’S HAPPENING! JESUS IS RISEN FROM THE DEAD! HE’S HERE WITH US! ALLELUIA!**