

## Easter-2026

The barrenness of Winter has given way to the fruitfulness of the Spring. There are tangible signs of new life all around us: plentiful and allergy producing pollen, green leaves, blooming flowers, and the annual resurrection of the grass. Our celebration of Easter reminds us that the ultimate form of new life IS the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. It is the pinnacle of new life on a cosmic and eternal scale. The effects of the resurrection reach into the celestial heavens, the earth, and those experiencing God's purifying love after death. It touches and transforms all human history past, present, and future, with the reality and hope of everlasting communion with God and the saved members of the human family.

We celebrate that the barrenness of sin will ultimately give way to the fruitfulness of divine mercy and salvation. We celebrate that the barrenness of suffering and death will ultimately give way to the fruitfulness of everlasting life, wholeness, and joy. It infuses our daily lives and our eternal destiny with a

pervading sense of hope. If we are personally united with the crucified and risen One, our lives become immersed with a meaning and purpose that both envelopes and transcends our earthly journey. Death gradually loses its sting. We begin to see death as the gateway to full communion with, and full immersion into, the infinite heart of God. It is a heart that eternally pulsates with a personal and everlasting love and mercy for us. We get to “taste and see the goodness of the Lord” in all of its unimaginable delight.

While we are journeying through this life towards our heavenly homeland, we will continually experience the alternating rhythm of barrenness to fruitfulness. The reality of death and resurrection is built into the very fabric of our daily lives. We experience this in two important and life-transforming ways. The first is through suffering. We experience the barrenness of various forms of suffering. In the midst of our crosses, if we keep looking up to Jesus Christ, looking out to other people, and looking deep within ourselves, we will gradually live into a place of fruitfulness. It is the

fruitfulness of life-altering and life-enhancing personal and spiritual growth and transformation.

I know this was the case in my own life. The most unbearable suffering that I have endured in my life was feeling invisible and insignificant to my peers during my formative years. This created deep emotional wounds within me. Sometimes, the pain was just so soul crushing and all-consuming. There were times that it gnawed at me almost 24/7. And you know what? The deep barrenness of my emotional pain turned out to be the most fruitful and soul enhancing encounter of my life. It led me deeper into the arms of Jesus where I was gradually healed and fortified by His love and grace. In His arms, I discovered, to my great joy and astonishment, I was truly visible and significant to Him. In His arms, I discovered I was called to be a wounded healer for Him and His people. Most importantly, in His arms, I discovered that it is in Him that “I live, and move, and have my being.” Even though I lived through “hades on earth” for a season of my life, with the gift of hindsight, I would have not wanted it any other way. It molded me into a better

version of myself. In your own life, what are those barren experiences that have led to your most profound experiences of personal and spiritual fruitfulness?

The second way that we experience the rhythm of barrenness to fruitfulness is through our own personal struggle with sin and ongoing surrender to God. We experience this barrenness whenever we are inconsistent and indifferent with God, consciously resist the nudges and inspirations of the Holy Spirit, and knowingly embrace beliefs and behavior that are contrary to the will of God. The longer we do it, and the greater the severity, our experience of inner barrenness is heightened and intensified.

Listen closely, all that is necessary to move from this state of barrenness to fruitfulness is the humble confession of our sins through prayer and the sacrament of Reconciliation. This confession is accompanied by a renewed openness and commitment to be united with Jesus through a life of trust, prayer, love, service, and striving for faithfulness. As we keep cultivating the relationship, and striving for

holiness, we witness the growth and development of the fruits of the Holy Spirit in our hearts and lives. Our growing fruitfulness replaces the sense of barrenness that we experienced as indifference, emptiness, addiction, and a sense of alienation. God is fulfilling His promise to give us a new heart and new spirit that delights in Him. This is a resurrection experience as we move from spiritual death to spiritual life, and spiritual apathy to spiritual passion. We can experience it as many times as we are willing to humble ourselves before the Lord and ask for His grace and forgiveness.

With the soul numbing death of our beloved Jacquie Bierwirth, we are feeling quite barren now. It is making it extremely hard for us to experience the fullness of Easter joy. Even though we will always carry the barrenness of her loss in our hearts, we can gradually move from barrenness to fruitfulness. How does this transformation take place? We can be thankful for the ways that she personally and spiritually blessed us. We can rejoice how her life and ministry bore fruit and will continue to bear fruit for us and our community.

We can seek to love and serve the Lord with her same joyful, loving, caring, and faith-filled spirit. We can recognize that Jacquie is still deeply plugged into our lives as a member of the communion of saints. From her place in heaven, she can spiritually accompany us and assist us with her prayers, guidance, and protection. Knowing Jacquie, we all know that she will be overjoyed to help us in any way that she can. Like St. Therese of the Little Flower, I am confident that she would delight “to spend her heaven doing good on earth.”

Jacquie’s death has put us in a difficult position this Easter. We want to celebrate our faith in, and the joy of, not only Jesus’s resurrection from the dead, but our own. Her death has made this extremely real for us. Amid our legitimate and understandable grief and heartache, can we still find a way to rejoice in Jacquie’s resurrection into the everlasting arms of Jesus? If you knew Jacquie, as much as she loved everyone, and she loved much, being in the everlasting arms of Jesus was all she ever wanted in life. It was the deepest joy and longing of her soul. Now the

deepest desires of her heart are forever fulfilled. The more we truly understand Jacquie from her faith perspective, we can move from a place of inward barrenness to a place of fruitfulness. In and through Jacquie, we can discover the everlasting beauty and power of the resurrection, unto eternal life. Her joy is forever complete. One day ours will be complete as well, and we will be forever reunited with Jacquie in the Father's House. We lose her temporarily, but we gain her back for all eternity. This is the everlasting joy and power of the resurrection that we celebrate today.