



## Fisch-ing Lines

by Deacon Howard Fischer

A Happy and Blessed Easter to you and your loved ones!



The following is a true story; Fr. Ron Lewinski knows the pastor of the parish where this story took place. One Easter, a Sunday School teacher gave each of her third grade students a L'eggs pantyhose container (shaped like a giant egg). The children were told to go outside on that lovely spring day, find some symbol for new life and put it in the container.

After running about the church property in wild confusion, the students returned to the classroom. Surrounded by the children, the teacher opened the eggs one by one. After each one, whether a flower, a butterfly, or a leaf, the class would ooh and ahh. Then an egg was opened with nothing inside. The children exclaimed, "That's not fair! Somebody didn't do their assignment!" Philip, a child with Down Syndrome, spoke up, "That's mine." "Philip, you didn't do things right," the teacher scolded. "There's nothing there!" "I did so do it!" Philip insisted. "I did do it. It's empty. The tomb was empty!" The class was silent as they realized that Philip had indeed captured the first sign of Easter life.

Easter is about absorbing the meaning of the Resurrection... and responding. Author Alice Camille writes:

*Easter isn't primarily about the Resurrection of Jesus – that is, Easter isn't fundamentally when we celebrate what happened to Jesus. None of the feasts of the church are meant to be days of holy nostalgia. We don't all gather on this day to peek into the empty tomb and sigh together: 'Wasn't it great of God to do that? To give our good Jesus a happy ending?' The scripture stories of Easter reflect our proper orientation to this feast. These are narratives of discovery and insight, commissioning and departure. Most of all they are stories about witnessing. What happened to Jesus is the discovery. What it means for us is the insight. What we have to do about it is our commissioning. Where we go with it determines our departure. Whom we tell and how we tell it—now that's our witness! Just as the event is not meant solely for Jesus,*

*it's not enough for it to have some private meaning for you or me. Where do we take this message: to those who already know it, or to those who've never heard the merest whisper of good news? Do we share it with people we like, or with enemies or strangers? What difference does it make that, on Easter morning, the tomb is always empty?*

The transformed being of the Risen Jesus reveals our ultimate destination of being one with God in Christ. The Resurrection must make us different – a difference that permeates every facet of our lives, a difference we bring to the lives of others.

Philip, the child with Down Syndrome, died not long after that Easter from an infection most children would have shrugged off. At his funeral, the class of third graders and their teacher marched up, not with flowers, but with empty pantyhose eggs to lay at the altar. The empty tomb of the Resurrection provides life and hope in the midst of death and grief; forgiveness and redemption in the midst of sin and evil. Given the daily tragedies in our world – violence, hunger, illness, scandal, untimely death – this is a message we desperately need. Philip got the message. So did his Sunday School classmates. Here's hoping that we do, too.