

This Easter I want to ask a very simple question: What did the Resurrection accomplish? The Catechism of the Catholic Church says that Jesus, by dying and rising from the dead, sets Christians free from sin and offers them new life. But if we look at the history of the world it's hard not to be disappointed. In the last 2000 years there have been so many Catholics who haven't lived as if they were set free from sin and had a "new life," among them Popes, bishops, priests, kings, and rulers of all kinds!

But you don't even need to look at history. Look around at the world today. There is still so much brokenness and sin – again not a lot of obvious liberation from sin or "new life" of the Resurrection there. And, let's be honest, when we each look at our own lives how has the Resurrection really affected us? By the power of Divine Love Jesus is risen, victorious over sin and death. But do I experience that victory in my own life? If not, why not? And, if not, then is what we are celebrating today meaningless.

So, what did the Resurrection accomplish? I would answer using an analogy that might strike you as a little silly. The Seahawks are going to drafting new players in a couple of weeks. It's all over the sports media. And my point is that Easter and the Resurrection are a lot like...the NFL draft.

That may sound a little odd – but think about it. If you are the type of pathetic football fanatic who actually watches the draft, you know it's a day of celebrations. As each player's name is called cameras cut to his home, where he receives a phone call telling him that that he's made it. He's received the reward for a lifetime of unending practice, exercise, and developing his skills – all his hard work and single minded focus comes to this great moment of triumph and victory. And it really is a worthy celebration, because he has entered a new state of life. He has a new identity – Pro Football Player!

But, in fact, that's when the real work begins. Making it to the pros is one thing – playing and staying there are something

different. Think about it: these players will have everything they could ever need to be successful: weightlifting coaches, nutrition coaches, sports psychologists all working in the best facilities of human performance imaginable. Their only job in life is to be in great physical shape and know their game inside and out.

All those drafted get these opportunities – and yet – some are going to be wildly successful, some are going to be flops. Some players come in and know they must continue to work really hard, and use all of the tools available to them, and they are successful. But some don't. They refuse to put in the work necessary, refuse to learn and they squander their opportunity.

That is how we can think of the celebration of Easter and the Resurrection: the celestial NFL draft. Yes, it's a real celebration, the festival of all that Christ has accomplished by His death and resurrection. The joy of Christmas is sweet, but the joy of Easter is triumphant! It is victory. It is like those draft-day celebrations, arms raised high at the good news. Alleluia! And that is you and

me in the celebration today. We are, each and every one of us, redeemed by the Resurrection, and baptized into the Body of Christ – we're chosen.

But we are not saints -- yet. No, the first Easter and our own baptism is a beginning; this is where the new work starts. So, again, let's ask, "What did the Resurrection accomplish?" By His death and Resurrection Jesus offers us everything we need to be saints – the superstars of human existence. We have all the graces of the Scriptures and the saints to coach us along. We have every tool available to us in repentance, conversion, prayer, study, sacrifice, self-denial, and especially Confession and the Eucharist.

And yet there are those of us who are going to be flops – hard-hearted people, we'll let our conscience die by our sins, we'll refuse the daily work of Christianity. But there are also future superstars of eternity – saints, here today. Jesus' Resurrection offers us everything we need if we want to be great.

That's why when you look back at history, with all the bad people, all the failures and disappointments, there are also in the same times and places, from the same circumstances, with the same opportunities the holy saints, the people, who, rather than coast along, spent their lives with single-minded focus, doing the hard work of Christianity, using every tool God gave them.

Look around at our world today, with so much mediocrity in the practice of the Christian faith – so many ways in which Catholics just go along with the flow of the world – and still there are amazing men and women who are living lives of real holiness and heroic witness to the faith.

I think about this for our newly baptized (this evening) (last night). This is a great celebration! But now the real work begins. There's no promise that now everything will be easy, that we can coast on in. But we have been picked by Christ. We're on His team now. We have a new identity. That will mean everything, if we let it. What the Resurrection accomplished was to offer a new life to

those who really want it, those who are willing to do whatever is necessary to follow the Resurrected Christ.