

Easter Sunday!

Have you ever enjoyed eating at Ryan's Restaurant here in Gardendale?

I've had **many good meals** there.

It's my 10 year old niece, Janay's, favorite place ...

Most every time she comes out to visit me she asks to go there.

Well, **new news** ... **3 weeks ago** ... on March 6th ... **Ryan's** closed ... **for good**.

The Birmingham News reported that **the Gardendale location** was **one of 92** restaurants that closed that day as **Ryan's** filed for bankruptcy.

How can that be? **Ryan's** was **a nice place** ... they had **good food** at a **good price**.

I enjoyed going there **and so did many others**.

I **can't believe** they're closed ... I mean, I've got **coupons** to use there!

But sorry ... I can't go there anymore; **no one can go there anymore** ... **it's closed!**

Ryan's was **a Smorgasbord Restaurant** where you paid one price to get in ...
and **then you got to enjoy an extensive variety of foods!**

They had **marvelous Soup & Salad Bar** ...
they had **2 whole counters** of **Main Course Dishes** ...
and they had **a luscious Dessert Bar**.

There were a few times where I kidded **my niece** that **Ryan's** was **a foretaste of...**
the Heavenly Banquet.

You've probably heard that expression before ... **the Heavenly Banquet** ...
it bubbles up images of an endless array of delicious food and drink.

But, you know ... once a person's spirit is in Heaven ...
I don't think food & drink is going to be all that important.

In fact, I believe that the banquet that souls enjoy in Heaven will be feasting on
the Beatific vision of God the Blessed Trinity.

Yes, Heaven is where **God dwells** ...
And Heaven is where **God** wants us to be

But there was a time when ... like **Ryan's** ... **Heaven** was closed.

Yes, the first human beings, **Adam and Eve** originally enjoyed a precious union with God living in the Garden of Eden.

But they misused their freedom and disobeyed God which resulted in them being sent out of the Garden ... and the Gates to Heaven were closed.

So, throughout the ages no one was ever able to go in. And that's because ... no one was ever able to put man back into a right relationship with God.

Until ... in the fullness of time ... God sent His Son to accomplish this task.

Jesus, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, who is **fully God and fully man,** **He** was the only one capable of returning us to a graced relationship with the Father.

And **that's what** we celebrate today ... the re-opening of Heaven!

How wonderful that day was for each and every one of us!
How exactly did this happen?

Well, Jesus, came among as a man and then out of Divine Love ... freely chose ... to suffer and die ... to atone for our sins and those of the whole world.

In doing this, he took us out of bankruptcy ... and paid the price to reopen the Gates of Heaven.

Just as paying one price got you into Ryan's ...

The **Death and Resurrection of Jesus** is **the one price** that gets us into Heaven.

St. Paul tells us today that ... Jesus, "died to sin once and for all."

So, the Heavenly Banquet is re-opened ... and it is available to everyone!

Jesus paid the price of entry for you ... so it's available ... if you choose to go.

Happy Easter! What a **huge deal** this is for us! It's **way better** than having a coupon ... Jesus paid the full price of our admission to the Eternal Banquet!

And **Jesus** did even more than that ...

He gave us everything we need to find our way to get to this Banquet.

Through **the Church** He established, **He gave us** access to His supernatural help in the Sacraments of **Baptism ... Confession ... Confirmation & Holy Communion.**

St. Paul tells us today in his letter to the **Romans**,

*“We were indeed buried with him through baptism into death,
so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father,
we too might live in newness of life.”*

So Baptism brings “**Newness of life**” ... **how wonderful** ...
who doesn't want that ... **especially** as we get older?

Well, it's through **Baptism** that we begin to live in **newness of life** ...
with the indwelling of **God's Holy Spirit** in us ...
made possible by ... **the Death and Resurrection** of Christ.

And it's through the **other Sacraments** **Jesus** gave us ... that we get to repair and
strengthen our relationship with God throughout our lives ...
so that we stay on the road to arriving at the **Gates of Heaven**.

Well, **last night**, we welcomed **10 more people** who came to know this.

After weeks of prayer and study, those **10 people** recognize that
the fullness of what Jesus wants them to have on their journey to Heaven
is found here in the **Catholic Church**.

Two of them were **baptized**.

And 8 of them, who are already baptized, made a Profession of Faith
and were confirmed in the **Catholic Church**.

What a **very special Easter** this is for them ...
where grace upon grace was poured out upon them
so they can continue to grow in “**Newness of life**”.

And for **many others**, this Easter is an **Anniversary** for them ...
for this is the day ... **1 year, 5 years, 10 years or more ago**
they too chose to enter the **Catholic Church**. **Happy Anniversary!**

May this Easter be a day where **all converts** and **all** who were baptized **Catholic** as
infants will be filled with the joy of **God's Great Love** for us.

With all this talk about **food** ... **I'll bet you're hungry**.

Well Ryan's is closed ... **never to open again**.

But Heaven, the **home of the Eternal Banquet**, has reopened ...
thanks to the Love and Work of Jesus Christ!

So, let's keep our reservation ... since **He's paid our price in full**. **Happy Easter!**