

Homily for Easter Sunday 2020

There has never been a Holy Week like this one due to the coronavirus pandemic which has caused the ban on public Worship not only here but in many other countries. Celebrating the great liturgies of this week has been a privilege, albeit alone and my heart reached out to those unable to be present in person. Many people have been able to visit the cathedral or other churches 'virtually' and participate in the liturgy from their own homes.

What is the same is the greatest story ever told, God's unconditional love for us shown in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. Despite the betrayals, denials and desertions, the torture, the mockery, the humiliation, final walk to Calvary and the death of Jesus on the cross, God never stopped loving us for a single second. At the heart of our faith is the belief that death did not have the last word. Mary of Magdala went to the tomb very early on the next day to find the tomb empty. She ran to tell Peter and John who go to the tomb, find the linen cloths, but not the body of Jesus and then we read - "Then the other disciple who had reached the tomb first also went in; he saw and he believed. Till this moment they had failed to understand the teaching of scripture, that he must rise from the dead."

The resurrection stories in the four gospels remind us how utterly unexpected Jesus rising from the dead had been. This is the event which changed the lives of those who experienced him after his death for ever, as it changes the lives of all those who believe in Jesus from their time to our own. We are only able to celebrate Mass because of Jesus' death and resurrection, sharing his risen life here and now. And we live that risen life when we take what we have heard in the Scriptures and put it into practice in our daily lives. In a sense the Mass doesn't end when we are dismissed by the priest, indeed in some ways it just begins.

Today I invite you to look at the sanctuary*, there are cloths from India, Bolivia, Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras and South Africa, the stole on the cross is from the Amazon and the bowl containing the grapes from China. They are there not just to bring colour but also to invite us to reach out in prayer and other ways to people in these countries who are today being denied their human rights, falsely imprisoned, tortured and murdered, those whose way of life and livelihoods are being destroyed by the greed of multinational corporations. Those who live in abject poverty and those who have nowhere to call home, fleeing from oppression and violence. They are still at Good Friday in the Jesus story and it is up to us to try and get them to Easter Sunday. And we can do that by becoming better informed, by supporting and encouraging individuals and communities through email or other forms of communication, by refusing to be silenced if others become indifferent to what we are saying, and by being in solidarity with them through the Eucharist. To do this is to live the Risen life of Jesus and to help transform the lives of ourselves and others for the better.

* There is a picture of the sanctuary on the back page of the newsletter

Bidding Prayers for Easter 2020

Celebrant:

Let us pray to Christ, the Author of life. God raised him from the dead and God will raise us to life by his love.

Reader:

For the Church - that as we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, the Church will help us all to live the baptismal promises we have just made together.

Lord in your mercy

For world leaders - that as we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, they will do all they can to uphold the human rights of all people and pursue non violent ways of reconciliation so that all may live in peace.

Lord in your mercy

For those who are suffering because of the coronavirus pandemic, those isolated at home, those in hospital, those nearing death - that as we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus from the dead we will help them to see that their suffering will end either in recovery or new life.

Lord in your mercy

For those courageous women and men, especially in the medical and caring professions, who are working throughout the world to keep us safe - that as we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus from the dead they may know they are a sign of risen life.

Lord in your mercy

For those who have died, all victims of violence, accident and natural disaster, and the Covid-19 virus, for Jeff Gunn and John Smith who died recently and John Powell, Caryl Pereira, Jeanne Diaz, Thomas Godfrey, Rose Caulfield and Joseph Derek Booth whose anniversaries occur this week, that as we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, they may share in his glory in heaven. Lord in your mercy

Either aloud or in silence we pray for our own special intention...pause...then

Lord in your mercy

We ask the prayers of Mary as we say, Hail Mary...

Celebrant:

On this day, Lord God, you opened the way to eternal life through your Son's victory over sin and death. Grant that as we celebrate the feast of the resurrection we may be