**Easter Homily 2018**

Can it really be true? After such a cruel, inhuman and degrading death, dealt out with such brutal hatred, can it really be true that he is risen? Whoever would want to come back to a people after being treated so despicably? And yet Jesus did just that. He stands here before us, without a shadow of resentment, absolutely no evidence of vengeance, not even the whisper of a desire for recompense. On the contrary, there is a gentleness, warmth and peace about his presence that makes you want to cry and laugh all at the same time. Don’t you just want to reach out and hug him? But, even more, want to be hugged by him, to be reassured, comforted - although shouldn’t we be the ones offering him comfort for all that he has been through?

We do not just stand before him, we stand with him and him with us. That feeling which is invading our hearts and souls is already neutralising our guilt and shame. The rich, warm silence we feel promotes a growing sense of peace that is bubbling up in our hearts. Then there are those other feelings. The feeling that we are valued, as though whatever happened in the past no longer mattered. We are also becoming aware of a hope growing ever stronger within us, bringing with it the sense of a future open to great possibilities: a future that eagerly, even hungrily, invites us **– no -** inspires us to offer all we have to make it better for everyone especially the poor. As we reflect, we realise that this peace, this hope and this future are all being gently and carefully moulded and shaped by none other than **LOVE**. And we now know, more than we ever did before, that LOVE is the **key**, that it is LOVE that has made all this possible. For only this kind of love could endure such heartless suffering and merciless death. Only this kind of love could change darkness into light, despair into hope and death into life. What is so enriching and uplifting in this moment is that we begin to recognise the presence of this Love in all that we do, in all that we give, in all that we receive. In the love we have for our loved ones, for our families, for all those we strive to help and those who help us. And we rejoice and are proud to call this most holy and abundant love, **JESUS CHRIST**. This year the daffodils have come at the right time, for they express the newness and brightness of the renewal within us. It is as though all our loves are being renewed, dancing afresh to a new and more vibrant song of joy. And, being filled with all these riches, we can no longer resist the urge, the desire to shout out our joy and sing our praise that Christ is risen!

A quote from the film, ‘*The Shape of Water’*, is one particular way of expressing the love Jesus evokes within us:

“*Unable to perceive the shape of You, I find You all around me. Your presence fills my eyes with Your love. It humbles my heart, for You are everywhere.”*

It is absolutely breath-taking for us to be here, to be fully part of this moment of wonder and glory; and no wonder that Olga wants to fully share this celebration with us, and we with her. And for Daniella who, like us, wants to share this wondrous gift with all those whom we will encounter in the days, months and years ahead.

Yes, **Jesus Christ is truly Risen! Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!**